The Choruses of Sophokles' Antigone *and* Philoktetes

A DANCE OF WORDS

MARGARET RACHEL KITZINGER

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A Dance of Words

By
Margaret Rachel Kitzinger

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PREFACE

My interest in the choruses of Sophokles began in the helplessness I felt when I tried to explain them to students. If I was teaching students who didn't know Greek, I found that all too frequently our discussion about the plays seemed perfectly satisfying without our making any reference to the chorus at all. If I was reading a play in Greek with students, we enjoyed the beauty of the songs' language and their rhythms, but had no way of talking about them that enriched our reading of the play as a whole. It was only when I directed first the *Ajax* and then the *Antigone* in productions in Greek that I began to see the ways in which the chorus, in creating another world on stage by its unique language and movement, gave the audience a different perspective from which to view the play's action. It took much more work with the texts of all of Sophokles' plays before I could articulate how the chorus' mode of expression, which was so vivid to me as a director, related to *what* the chorus was saying, their understanding of the action. In doing this work, it has been of particular importance to me to try to combine the perspectives of a philologist and a practitioner of the theater.

I am grateful to all the students over the years who have helped me think about Sophokles' plays, and particularly to those who have been willing to give themselves over to the challenge of putting the plays on stage, whether in Greek or in English. I would also like to thank colleagues who have generously offered me their thoughts, reactions, and encouragement: Rob Brown, Carolyn Dewald, Pat Easterling, Helene Foley, Mitch Miller, Seth Schein and Don Lateiner. And above all, my gratitude to Eamon Grennan for his love of language, his readiness to share that love with me, and his generosity in reading and commenting on many versions of this book is boundless.

Rachel Kitzinger
Vassar College

INTRODUCTION

The following essay explores the role the chorus plays in creating the dramatic power of Sophoklean tragedy. In it I look at the language of the choruses of the *Antigone* and *Philoktetes* to understand both how and what the chorus communicates and how that communication relates to the language of the actors in the episodes. With this close reading I hope to show that the chorus' mode of expression, song and dance, shapes—or is inextricably intertwined with—its world view. For Sophokles the difference in attitude and mode of communication between actors and chorus allows him to explore the action of the play from two radically different points of view. Reconciling, or at least comprehending, this tension is central to the audience's experience of the drama. Sadly the text of the songs is all that is left to us of the chorus' performance, a performance in which dance movement, melody, and words were all critical elements in the chorus' representation of its point of view. I wish to show in the following pages, however, that the words of the songs can help us understand the fuller performative context of the chorus and that without such an understanding the role of the chorus does not emerge clearly.[1] In putting the chorus' mode of expression at the center of an understanding of its role, I wish to emphasize its essential difference from the actors; its mode of expression entails another way of thinking about the action of the play, one circumscribed and defined by what can be said and thought in the medium of song and dance, as opposed to speech and action.[2]

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[1] Other critics take into consideration the chorus' mode of expression in discussing its role, though without asking how that mode of expression affects what the chorus says. So, for example, Davidson 1986, 69–78 argues against viewing the chorus as simply another actor by pointing to the importance of music and dance as features of choral performance not always consistent with "characterization" but does not discuss any particular ode. And Scott 1996 interprets the tone of choral songs by studying their musical design while assuming that choral characterization, of which tone is an element, does not differ in radical ways from the actors'.

[2] Dale 1969, 214 writes: "…even when the Chorus takes a large part in the action, whether in its own cause or as the main interlocutor confronting the chief character, its contribution is lyric or emotional in tone…" She is speaking here of the chorus' role in the episodes. How much truer is this distinction between actor's and chorus' mode of expression if we consider the difference between odes and episodes! The claim,

In taking this approach I am making two assumptions that are central to my argument. First, I assume that, in Sophokles, the words of the chorus' songs provide evidence for a consistent choral perspective, from play to play and from scene to scene within a play, however much the song is also integrated into the particular circumstances of the chorus' character and of the plot. Critics have analyzed brilliantly individual odes and their relation to the immediate dramatic context or have generalized about the chorus' dramatic function,[3] but the connection between the content and style of individual songs and a theoretical understanding of Sophokles' dramatic use of the chorus is rarely made.[4] It is my intention to show that we can go beyond generalities about choral collectivity, traditionality and the intermediary role it plays between actor and audience only if we look at the language of individual odes as evidence not only for a particular reaction to a particular moment in the play but also for a frame of mind which constitutes the choral "character"—a character very different from the actors' and formed in part by the nature of its performance.[5]

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which she and many critics make, that the chorus' tone is emotional needs further explanation. Clearly both actors and chorus are capable of emotional reactions. It is not an exclusively choral characteristic to express feeling. However, the use of music and dance may allow the chorus to speak more directly to the *audience's* feeling. This does not mean, however, that what the chorus communicates to the audience is solely, or even primarily, its emotional reaction.

[3] Two important examples of such work are Gardiner 1987 and Burton 1980. Gardiner establishes an understanding of the overall role of the chorus by a careful study of its consistent characterization, arguing that Sophocles was concerned to create in the chorus another character, like Antigone or Creon. She would argue that the chorus does not dance, for example, if it is out of character for it to do so (ibid., 7). Burton analyzes each choral ode, explaining its relevance to the surrounding dramatic context but argues against the expectation of finding any consistent or coherent point of view or approach in the odes.

[4] Ditmars 1992 has explored the overall contribution of the choral odes to the dramatic impact of the *Antigone* by a careful examination of content and form. I have found her insistence on taking the language of the chorus seriously and her attempt to use the odes themselves as evidence for an overall function for the chorus valuable, although I often disagree with her particular interpretations. Other work which talks about the connection between form and content, like Wolfgang Hering's analysis of the first stasimon (Hering 1985, 25–41), does not address the more general question of the chorus' mode of delivery and its role in the drama. So also, Silk 1998, who makes a plea for a consideration of style in understanding the effect of the chorus and who analyzes in detail a number of specific choral passages does not go on to explain how the varied levels of intensity he describes in different passages, giving them greater or less authority, contributes to the overall effect of the play on the audience.

[5] Hall 1999, 101 acknowledges the rupture between "formalist analyses of tragedy and anthropologically informed studies promoting the erasure of the distinction between

The second assumption I make, intimately connected to the first and one I hope to validate by the discussion of the odes, is that the chorus' function cannot be understood by analogy with the actors'.[6] A number of scholars have recently made a new attempt to understand the distinction between these two kinds of tragic performers and the different authority they have in tragedy in general. Looking at the terms of this debate will be helpful in explaining the particular point of view I wish to develop. The debate starts with the suggestion made by Vernant and Vidal-Naquet[7] that the collectivity of the chorus represents the authoritative voice of the contemporary democratic city, in tragic contrast to the remote, isolated voices of the individual actors who articulate an outdated heroic ethos. The terms of the debate center on whether this is a productive way of describing the opposition between chorus and actors and where authority lies in their different perspectives, however one describes them. John Gould has questioned this way of defining the opposition, arguing that extant choruses in Greek tragedy are for the most part made up of women or other non-citizens whose poetic language is a far remove from the democratic discourse of the polis.[8] Its voice, therefore, represents a marginal point of view, the perspective of the "Other." He argues that the chorus, both by its generic differences from the actors and by its particular identity in a particular play, contributres to the variety and multiplicity of perspectives that make up tragic vision, but always from a marginal position which does not correspond to the status of the audience in the polis. Simon Goldhill, in his response,[9] wants to salvage the chorus as a collective voice that participates on equal footing with the actors in the democratic discussion of "authority, knowledge, and tradition" and has the ability to

what used to be called 'art' and 'reality.'" Scholars who study style in thinking about tragedy in general and the chorus in particular tend not to engage with the questions which those who are concerned with tragedy as a civic institution and choruses as ritual performance raise.

[6] Many critics have argued, on the basis of Aristotle's claim in the *Poetics* (18.1456a25) that the chorus should be treated as one of the actors, that the chorus' point of view is determined by its characterization. So, for example, Ernst-Richard Schwinge, in his consideration of the chorus of the *Antigone* (Schwinge, 1971), interprets the choral odes by showing that the chorus is characterized as citizens who are afraid of Creon and are therefore unable openly to express their disapproval of him and their support of Antigone.

[7] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1981.

[8] Gould 1996, 217–243.

[9] Goldhill 1996, 244–256.

articulate the concerns of the citizen body. He agrees with much of Gould's argument but deemphasizes the chorus' marginality, as it is established by its identity. Their debate hinges on how important the dramatic identity (e.g. old women, old men, sailors, young girls) of the chorus is in determining how its performance is received by the audience. Helene Foley[10] argues that the identity—gender, ethnicity, age—of the chorus is an important aspect of its role in the drama but also acknowledges that there are "many features common to all choruses that tend to equalize their role regardless of their specific identity;"[11] she points to common features such as the use of traditional wisdom, connections to the religious sphere, and use of ritual gesture that override the particular identity of any one chorus in determining its role in the drama, although particular identity was certainly visible to the audience in the chorus' voice, gesture, costume and style of dance.

These scholars complicate the dichotomy that Vernant and Vidal-Naquet suggest between chorus and actors by pointing out that the chorus must always be understood both as a "character" with a particular identity and as participants in a ritual performance. Determining to what extent a tragic chorus evokes other contemporary civic choral performances and the long tradition of choral lyric prior to tragedy or is fully integrated as a character into the fictional world of the drama is important in trying to understand the nature of its authority and the degree to which the chorus participates in the same world, and with the same fictional status, as the actors. Albert Henrichs offers a nuanced understanding of the chorus' relationship to other ritual performances.[12] He suggests that the chorus mediates between the dramatic past in which the plot takes place and the audience's present through their self-conscious participation in the ritual of the festival of Dionysos. They, thus, are both inside and outside the world of the play. Claude Calame draws the line more firmly between tragic lyric and other choral performances, arguing that, because the chorus participates in the fictional narrative of the plot, their performance is also a fictional action and subject to the same kind of dramatic irony as the actors' performance.[13] Herb Golder takes this line of argument even further when he imagines that the gestures and dance of the

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[10] Foley 2003, 1–30.
[11] Ibid., 20–21.
[12] Henrichs 1994–95, 56–111.
[13] Calame 1999, 125–53.

chorus belong to the same vocabulary as the actors' and do not derive from performances of other kinds of choruses.[14] The degree to which one imagines that the tragic chorus' performance evokes other ritual performance determines how completely one sees the chorus as part of the dramatic world of the play. Is it, like the actors, subject to the limits imposed by its identity and partial understanding of the action, or does it instead refer the audience to a reality beyond the limits of the tragic world and bring onto stage a truth whose authority has roots outside the dramatic fiction?

This debate, as I have briefly sketched it here, sets the framework for understanding the chorus as a dramatic character whose difference from the actors, if there is one, is determined by its connection to a non-dramatic tradition of ritual performance. I will, in the following pages, modify this framework in a number of ways. In the first place, I attempt to describe only Sophokles' view of the chorus, as I believe that the complicated relationship between actor and chorus and between the fictional world of the drama and the contemporary political and religious reality of the audience is manipulated in very different ways by the three surviving playwrights. Given the differences in style, dramatic construction, and political and religious concerns of Aeschylus, Sophokles and Euripides, there seem to be no grounds for believing that they viewed the chorus, and its relationship to the actors, in the same way. Sophokles has a particular interest in exploring the relationship of language to action in his plays. Part of that exploration, I would argue, is the dramatization of a tension between actor and chorus arising from their participation in different kinds of action and their use of different forms of discourse. To the extent that Aeschylus and Euripides are interested in different questions and view the role of tragedy within the polis differently, they will necessarily construct the difference between the chorus and the actors differently.

Secondly, because choral performance, however adapted to the dramatic context, refers through its music and dance, to other traditions of choral lyric, all of which have a ritual context,[15] Sophokles uses

[14] Golder 1996, 1–10.

[15] Herington 1985 has shown that the roots of tragic lyric can be found in the earlier tradition of earlier lyric and would necessarily evoke that tradition in performance, and few critics would argue with Henrichs 1994–5, 59, when he claims that the "choral dancing in ancient Greek culture always constitutes a form of ritual performance, whether the dance is performed in the context of the dramatic festival or in other cultic and festive settings."

the chorus to explore and question the nature of ritual action, in the particular circumstances of the play and as it relates to particular acts of individuals. In as much as the play reveals the limits of the chorus' point of view, we are experiencing the limits of a kind of action which is unique to the chorus in the play but which makes reference to all ritual performance.[16] The chorus does not participate in the action as the actors do, because the nature of their action derives from the world of ritual song and dance. Though the chorus may have an identity that integrates it into the dramatic context, its action within that context is, in Sophoklean drama, defined by the way that music and dance can affect what happens to human beings in the world.

And, therefore, if the play enacts the limits of choral understanding (and of actors' understanding) these limits also exist in the real world of the audience. Members of the audience see in the fictional world of the drama, constituted by both actors and chorus, different aspects of their responsibilities as citizens of the polis. The audience does not view the authority of actors and chorus differently; rather, different aspects of their lives as citizens within the polis are enacted by actors and chorus and, in that enactment, the tension between the authority of each perspective dramatizes a tension that any member of the audience feels as an individual and as a participant in the community of the polis. Since each group enacts an essential aspect of "political" being—taking responsible action and performing ritual—choosing between them is not an option. In this way the central fiction of the dramatic world is the coherence created by the conventions of the tragic genre, which allow stasima and episodes to form a coherent whole with a beginning, middle and end, despite the irresolvable tensions between them.[17]

In *Languages of the Stage: Essays in the Semiology of the Theatre*,[18] Patrice Pavis offers a way of defining theatrical reception which is, I think, particularly useful for understanding the relationship of chorus, actors,

[16] Budelmann 2000, 201–205, argues that the chorus' language, by emphasizing its collective nature, connects the chorus both to the group experience of the audience and to unseen groups within the drama who are affected by the play's action. Although he doesn't mention other ritual choruses as one kind of group the chorus evokes and thereby connects to the audience's experience, this idea is compatible with his approach to the Sophoklean chorus.

[17] An example of a critical reading of Sophokles that argues for a hierarchy between actors' and chorus' perspectives is Müller 1961 and 1967. He consistently argues that the choral point of view is undermined ironically by their lack of understanding of Antigone. In his view the chorus is a foil whose ignorance focuses our attention on Antigone's heroism.

[18] Pavis 1982, 69–87.

and audience in Sophoklean tragedy. In an effort to define "theatrical pleasure" and how the performance of a play works on an audience, he uses the term 'perspectives' to describe the relation both of characters to each other and of the event of the performance to its audience. This term arises from a sensitivity to the importance of space in the theatre: where an audience member is sitting in relation to the stage, or where on the stage a character speaks, relative to other characters, is a crucial factor in the analysis of a performance. But he correctly argues that spatial perspective by itself is not an adequate tool to describe the experience of the theatre and goes on to apply the idea of perspective to characters' language and speech and to audiences' perception of that language.

In discussing perspective in this sense, Pavis argues that the audience receives and compares different perspectives about the world through the characters' language in two different ways. An audience member experiences the speech of a character as a self-contained system which establishes that particular character as a coherent 'reality' within the play, but he also experiences any character's speech in relation to the world outside the play, so that the character's perspective is comprehensible not as a self-contained system but in connection with a particular time and place outside the world of the theatre. This second understanding of perspective he calls "the situation of speech."

Understanding these two different points of view activated by the characters gives the spectator

> the double pleasure of seeing via another consciousness, and of observing the character—pleasures of identification with and distancing from the Other. This constant changing from a simple *vision* to a *vision of vision*, which Brecht, among others, sees as the very essence of theatrical pleasure, allows us to patiently construct, in the course of the performance and our critical reflection upon it, the end product of these perspectives which is then assimilated to the *perspective of reception* intended by the author.[19]

Because Pavis is discussing modern theatre, he looks for the signals the playwright gives to activate this "perspective of reception" in the way our sympathies vis à vis different characters are manipulated and the way in which characters' points of view are conflictual and not easily resolved. If he were considering Sophoklean tragedy, he would, I think, find another resource in the different modes of communication characteristic of actors and chorus, which necessitate a different kind of

[19] Ibid., 85.

receptivity in the audience. This difference alerts us to a difference in perspective. Both internally within the world of the play and externally in the world from which the audience enters the theatre and which in a sense they bring with them into the theatre, the actors' language represents a tool for argument and the creation of an action, while the chorus' language articulates a perspective free of the responsibility of action and open to the perception of the divine order, which its song and dance speak to and attempt to affect. Its perspective is that of people who understand, comment on, and respond to the action through sensibilities informed by the syntax, rhythms, and formal characteristics of song and dance but who are not responsible for deciding what is to be done or for carrying it out, except in as much as their song "acts" on the situation.

There are of course moments when the chorus' and actors' roles draw close to each other: the chorus leader delivers iambic trimeters during the episodes, and actors sometimes sing, alone or with the chorus.[20] But these moments do not dissolve the fundamental difference between the two, which is visible and audible in the alternation of episode and stasimon and also, as we shall see, in the shared song of a kommos, and which is apparent in the fact that the chorus' "action" is visually separated from the actors'.[21] The chorus' perspective is, as we have seen, aligned with the traditions of choral lyric which mark the cultic and festive lives of all Athenians, and this connection is an important part of the "situation of speech" to which the audience relates the chorus' performance. However varied and distinct the nature of choral utterances can be in different contexts, what is common to them all is that words and actions stand in a metaphoric relationship to the "real" world because they are sung and danced.[22] When the chorus sings and

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[20] That choral song and the participation of the chorus leader in the episodes can be seen as different functions is succinctly expressed by Jouanna 1999 in his discussion of the chorus of the *Antigone*. He discusses separately the "rôle dramatique" of the chorus, made up of its iambic and recitatif lines, and the "rôle lyrique," the songs. He sees a difference in the role these two different forms of speech play and argues that it is harder to describe the dramatic function of the "rôle lyrique".

[21] See Egert Pöhlmann 1997, 1–10 for a careful analysis of how playwrights handle the impossibility of the chorus entering the skene; also Reimer 1998, 89–111 for a discussion of Sophokles' particular skill in orchestrating the moments when the chorus seems to enter into the action by suggestions it makes to an actor. He would argue that the chorus plays a significant role in shaping the action of the play at these moments.

[22] Kernodle 1957, 1–3 claims: "... everything we know of the Fifth Century implies that the chorus was there to be seen as well as heard—and everything we know from acting and producing today tells us that it is infinitely easier to make an audience understand words and ideas if the whole body is used rather than just the voice."

dances, its movement and language serve not to create or affect a single course of events, as the actors do, but to represent mimetically a kind of order in the relationships between the natural, divine, and human worlds (as we shall see when we examine the stasima in detail). The effect of the play depends in part on the uneasy relationship between this representation of order and the decisions and actions of the characters. Both evoke a reality outside the theater in which the tension between them has significant consequences for how members of the audience choose to act in the world.

The audience is put in the position of holding these two perspectives together—"the perspective of reception," that goes to the heart of the tragic experience Sophokles intends for his audience. As actors in the "real" world, members of the audience have an affinity with the actors' point of view, but they also share the chorus' way of looking at the world, particularly as they participate in choral performances in the cultic festivities of the polis and are aware of a tradition reaching far back in their history and shaping many of their assumptions about man's place in the scheme of things. For members of the audience both perspectives are a necessary and familiar part of their own experience but become part of the "problem" of the play, as the limits of each are revealed, and they are shown to be fundamentally contradictory.

I would argue that in Sophokles this tension, this dissonance, is central to the drama. On the one hand are the thoughts and feelings that characterize an individual at the moment when he or she acts to shape his or her position within the culture of the *polis*, and on the other are the song and dance that evoke a communal tradition with a very different relationship to time and to history. The audience is made up of people who consider both modes of expression their own but in the course of the play are made aware of the degree to which these points of view are both limited and in conflict and cannot be reconciled either by compromise or by hierarchizing their value and eliminating one in deference to the truth of the other.[23]

He goes on to argue that the chorus acts out on the level of myth the action of the play: "It is only a step further to make the action of the chorus symbolic of part or all of the whole play, like a map, a miniature diagram, drawn out in terms not of the immediate story but of mythic prototypes…" I agree with him that the action of the chorus, its dance, is mimetic and representative of a different level of meaning; I would not describe that meaning as mythic.

[23] As Easterling, 1997, 164, puts it: "[The chorus'] job is to help the audience *become involved in the process of responding*, which may be a matter of dealing with profoundly contradictory issues and impulses."

The multiple perspectives that Pavis puts at the heart of the audience's experience of the theater have both spatial and verbal dimensions. The chorus's transformation of the space of the theater has been studied in a stimulating book by David Wiles.[24] He shows how particular features of the chorus' dance and song transform the audience's understanding of what the space where the action takes place means. He reconstructs from the language and rhythm of choral songs how the dance might create images that transform a space that is realistically referential in the actors' perception, by adding layers of meaning that reflect back on and transform the events taking place in that space. He argues strongly against "sharp spatio-temporal demaraction of choral ode from action" and denies that "the purpose of the ode is... to offer philosophical reflection, emotional relief, or the pleasure of verbal pictures." Rather, like Patrice Pavis, he understands that the role of the chorus is to change the audience's vision and make it see the action "in terms that are not monocular and rationalistic."[25] I would argue that, at least in Sophokles, the "meshing" of the chorus into the action, to use Wiles' term, is not comfortable, and the multiple vision that the audience must cultivate is often dizzying and disorienting. The division between chorus and actors may not be marked spatially or temporally, but it exists vividly in the different modes of their expression and in the alternation of episode and stasimon, however compromised that alternation may become by shared lyrics between actor and chorus, as we shall see. In Sophokles these differences are indicative of fundamentally different ways of seeing the world.

We must turn to the language of the chorus' songs to bring this theoretical argument into an imaginable theatrical reality. Although the following detailed discussion of the language of the odes relies on the words as they appear on the page, the interpretation requires of the imagination a constant translation from page to stage, from silence to sound, from immobility to movement. It is only through the accumulation of such interpretations and the imaginative work that inspires them that the texture of Sophoklean drama as I have described it can really be felt and my argument gain complexity and persuasiveness.

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[24] Wiles 1997.
[25] Ibid., 125.

CHAPTER ONE

ANTIGONE

To define more fully the dynamic I have been describing, I have chosen to focus in the first place on the *Antigone*, because there is a particular closeness between the content of the stasima in this play and their form. The focus of all the stasima is, in a general way, the issue of causality and responsibility for what happens in human life (which is, of course, also a central issue for the actors in this play.) Since the chorus is singing about the nature of human action, its role as non-actor—as dancer and singer—is particularly relevant to an understanding of its perspective on this subject. The form and style of the songs, as texts to be danced and sung, and their content, what the chorus says about action, make a particularly harmonious whole; the one cannot easily be understood without the other. And as a result, the tension between the chorus' and actor's point of view also emerges particularly clearly.

After a discussion of the odes of the *Antigone*, I will look at the odes of the *Philoktetes*, where this congruence between subject matter and mode is absent and where many critics have argued that the chorus is particularly closely integrated into the action. Despite the vast difference in the ways these two choruses operate, we will see that in both plays the tension between the perspectives of actors and chorus is present. In both plays the audience is invited to feel the differences in the way each conceives of and describes the ordering of the world and man's position in it. Issues of narrative structure, of history, of cause and effect, of the ambiguity inherent in the human condition in the face of the divine all come into play, not so that they can be resolved but so that the audience finds itself face to face with two authentic and irreconcilable ways of constructing a world and existing within it.

1) *The parodos: from march to dance*[1]

στρ. α
ἀκτὶς ἀελίου, τὸ κάλ-
λιστον ἑπταπύλῳ φανὲν
Θήβᾳ τῶν προτέρων φάος,
ἐφάνθης ποτ’, ὦ χρυσέας
ἁμέρας βλέφαρον, Διρκαί-
ων ὑπὲρ ῥεέθρων μολοῦσα,
τὸν †λεύκασπιν Ἀργόθεν
φῶτα βάντα πανσαγίᾳ†
φυγάδα πρόδρομον ὀξυτόρῳ
κινήσασα χαλινῷ·

ὃς ἐφ’ ἡμετέρᾳ γῇ Πολυνείκους
ἀρθεὶς νεικέων ἐξ ἀμφιλόγων
ὀξέα κλάζων
αἰετὸς ἐς γῆν ὣς ὑπερέπτα,
λευκῆς χιόνος πτέρυγι στεγανὸς
πολλῶν μεθ’ ὅπλων
ξύν θ’ ἱπποκόμοις κορύθεσσιν.

ἀντ. α
στὰς δ’ ὑπὲρ μελάθρων φονώ-
σαισιν ἀμφιχανὼν κύκλῳ
λόγχαις ἑπτάπυλον στόμα
ἔβα, πρίν ποθ’ ἁμετέρων
αἱμάτων γένυσιν πλησθῆ-
ναί ⟨τε⟩ καὶ στεφάνωμα πύργων
πευκάενθ’ Ἥφαιστον ἑλεῖν.
τοῖος ἀμφὶ νῶτ’ ἐτάθη
πάταγος Ἄρεος, ἀντιπάλῳ
δυσχείρωμα δράκοντος.

Ζεὺς γὰρ μεγάλης γλώσσης κόμπους
ὑπερεχθαίρει, καί σφας ἐσιδὼν
πολλῷ ῥεύματι προσνισομένους
χρυσοῦ καναχῆς ὑπεροπτείαις,
παλτῷ ῥιπτεῖ πυρὶ βαλβίδων
ἐπ’ ἄκρων ἤδη
νίκην ὁρμῶντ’ ἀλαλάξαι.

στρ. β
ἀντιτύπᾳ δ’ ἐπὶ γᾷ πέσε τανταλωθεὶς
πυρφόρος ὃς τότε μαινομένᾳ ξὺν ὁρμᾷ
βακχεύων ἐπέπνει
ῥιπαῖς ἐχθίστων ἀνέμων.
εἶχε δ’ ἄλλᾳ τάδ’· ⟨ἀλλ’⟩
ἄλλ’ ἐπ’ ἄλλοις ἐπενώ-
μα στυφελίζων μέγας Ἄ-
ρης δεξιόσειρος.

ἑπτὰ λοχαγοὶ γὰρ ἐφ’ ἑπτὰ πύλαις
ταχθέντες ἴσοι πρὸς ἴσους ἔλιπον
Ζηνὶ προπαίῳ πάγχαλκα τέλη,
πλὴν τοῖν στυγεροῖν, ὣ πατρὸς ἑνὸς
μητρός τε μιᾶς φύντε καθ’ αὑτοῖν
δικρατεῖς λόγχας στήσαντ’ ἔχετον
κοινοῦ θανάτου μέρος ἄμφω.

ἀντ. β
ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἁ μεγαλώνυμος ἦλθε Νίκα
τᾷ πολυαρμάτῳ ἀντιχαρεῖσα Θήβᾳ,
ἐκ μὲν δὴ πολέμων
τῶν νῦν θέσθε λησμοσύναν,
θεῶν δὲ ναοὺς χοροῖς
παννύχοις πάντας ἐπέλ-
θωμεν, ὁ Θήβας δ’ ἐλελί-
χθων βάκχιος ἄρχοι.

ἀλλ’ ὅδε γὰρ δὴ βασιλεὺς χώρας,
†Κρέων ὁ Μενοικέως,†...νεοχμὸς
νεαραῖσι θεῶν ἐπὶ συντυχίαις
χωρεῖ τίνα δὴ μῆτιν ἐρέσσων,
ὅτι σύγκλητον τήνδε γερόντων
προὔθετο λέσχην,
κοινῷ κηρύγματι πέμψας;

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[1] I use the Oxford Classical Text edited by H. Lloyd-Jones and N. Wilson (Oxford, 1990). If an alternative reading of a passage seems preferable, it will be noted. See Willink 2001, 65–89 for a reconsideration of much of the colometry as Lloyd-Jones and Wilson have printed it.

We can see how the chorus represents action and transforms the chaos of an actual event into the order of its song and dance by examining the description of the battle that is the occasion for this song. The tension between the world of the actors and the world of the chorus is immediately present in the abrupt contrast the *parodos* makes with the preceding prologue, as we experience Antigone's and Ismene's reaction to the recent battle, on the one hand, and the chorus' on the other.[2] This contrast can be explained in part by who they are and what their relationship is to the participants in the battle; the chorus, as elderly and trusted advisors to the king, will naturally have a different reaction from the sisters of the dead brothers. But it also reveals a basic difference in the way, in general, actors and chorus think about the situation in which they are involved. The actors in the prologue must decide what to do about Polyneikes' corpse and Kreon's edict; for Antigone, at least, how she is defined depends upon what she does in this situation. The chorus, however, is not defined by the need to determine a course of action; its concern is to celebrate the recent action of the armies through its performance. As the chorus does this, it interprets the battle according to its understanding of order and pattern, as they are contained and expressed in song and dance. As it performs, it gives the audience an aural and visual image not only of the battle but also of the nature and limits of all human action. What we understand about human action through these images stands in marked contrast to the assumptions that Antigone and Ismene make in the prologue about the meaning and nature of their actions.

We can begin to understand how the parodos transforms the battle it ostensibly celebrates by looking at its metrical structure. In the parodos sung strophes and antistrophes in aeolic meters alternate with recited anapaests.[3] Each of the two meters, along with particular aspects of the language that creates each of the rhythms, presents a different level of mimetic representation of the battle the chorus is recalling and celebrating.[4] The anapaests, being closely (though not exclusively,

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[2] This contrast is frequently noted. See, for example, Burton 1980, 90; Ditmars 1992, 24.

[3] Burton 1980, 90, assumes that the anapaests are spoken by the coryphaeus, presumably to mark dramatically the difference in tone between the two systems. If the chorus does not stand still while the coryphaeus speaks, the effect I am describing would be achieved by the chorus' movement, whether or not the whole chorus is singing.

[4] Ibid., 91–4, notes the alternating structure of lyrics and anapaests and ascribes to the different metrical systems a difference in tone and mood. Coleman 1972, 6 explains

of course) connected to their military use in everyday life,[5] recall an army's marching rhythm and mark the transformation of the army's movement into the dance movement of the chorus. The strophes and antistrophes start out in the form of a paean celebrating victory,[6] but then extend this traditional use of the paean by representing the victory as the triumph of a certain kind of order in the universe. One might say that the anapaests work in the mode of simile, while the aeolic meters create a metaphor. In the former the chorus self-consciously imitates the armies' action; in the latter it interprets its own mimetic action as a representation of universal order.[7] Thus the two alternating modes of paean and marching rhythm translate the victorious army and the battle itself into different levels of mimetic representation on stage. By this process we become aware of the way in which the chorus translates and represents 'reality;' we also realize how different its reality is from the battle itself and understand that the chorus' perspective on events is clearly bound up with its own means of representing them.

With this reading of the general metrical structure in mind we can look more closely at how each of the two metrical forms and their mimetic functions are enhanced by the language of the song. The opening strophe, a 'realistic' song of victory, recalls the use of the paean in the choral tradition.[8] At this point the chorus' song conforms both to a familiar use of lyric outside the dramatic context and to the chorus'

the contrast as one between family tragedy and civic victory. Ditmars 1992, 31 notes the contrast but sees it as a way of subordinating the sorrow surrounding the death of Polyneikes and Eteokles to the "single dominant mood of joy." Scott 1996, 31–32 goes further, observing not only a difference in tone but also the different content of the anapaestic and lyric parts of the ode. He describes the lyric as "imagistic," in contrast with 'more direct explanations or interpretations of the image in the anapaests.' He sees this pattern of bold lyric and explanatory anapaests as characteristic of the chorus throughout the play and understands the anapaests as consistently introducing a fact or a character which undermines the tone of the lyrics.

[5] See Herington 1985, 120–1.

[6] Burton 1980, 91.

[7] I owe to Carolyn Dewald the suggestion that as the chorus represents the divine order metaphorically, it also becomes a part of that order and is therefore also acting metonymically.

[8] Fairbanks 1900, 60–5 describes the contexts in which a paean of victory might be sung and its general characteristics. The context is usually a processional of the returning army or a hymn of praise and joy sung at a sacrifice after victory. This song combines these two forms: the chorus is processing into the orchestra, recalling the processional of the victorious army, and its song is a song of joy and praise to the gods for bringing victory. Rutherford 1994–5, 126–7 calls the parodos a paean but thinks its evocation of Pindar's Paian IX complicates the celebratory tone.

dramatic character as elders of the city who naturally wish to celebrate their city's salvation. Sophokles grounds the song at its beginning in familiar and natural conventions to establish the chorus' identity, both as characters and as lyric performers. In the first strophe the image of the rising sun's rays chasing away the enemy (100–109) seems to be simply an appropriate way to signal the nature of that identity: the chorus, perhaps recalling the address to the sun of Pindar's *Paian* IX, strikes a note of hope and renewal through a traditional form. But this simple and traditional lyric opening becomes more complex as the song goes on. The image becomes part of a series of images that erase the human agents in the battle and interpret the victory as the manifestation of divine order, and the chorus' purpose in singing this song extends beyond celebration to an assertion of a particular way of viewing the action it celebrates. In retrospect the celebratory image of the sun as the agent of the enemy's retreat becomes part of the chorus' strategy to represent the victory as an illustration of how the natural and divine worlds shape human reality.

When the chorus shifts for the first time into chanted anapaests (and presumably marches to the chant), it no longer erases but rather evokes and imitates the human agents of the victory. It tells of, and perhaps imitates, the attacking enemy army, describing it with the vivid simile of the eagle (ὀξέα κλάζων/ αἰετὸς…ὣς ὑπερέπτα, 'as an eagle, screeching, flew over…' 112–3).[9] Here the movement it describes, of the eagle in the sky, is a representation in words of the movement it makes on stage, which is itself a mimetic representation of the real army's march. Instead of celebrating the victory and describing it as part of a just order, as it has done in the strophe, in the anapaests the chorus imitates and, in so doing, transforms the battle into an event which it can appropriate into its own perspective and mode of performance. Throughout the song the anapaests continue to make us aware that the chorus' interpretation of the battle arises out of its ability to translate the battle into song and dance. The lyric stanzas perform that interpretation, as they illustrate imagistically and in movement the principles the victory makes manifest.

[9] This reading follows Lloyd-Jones and Wilson's Oxford Text, which uses Scaliger's emendation to make it clear that the eagle refers not to Polyneices specifically but to the army in general. See Burton 1980, 93 and Griffith 1999, 146 for an opposing opinion.

Let us see how this plays itself out in the rest of the parodos. In the first antistrophe, the simile of the eagle changes into a metaphor. The first words of the antistrophe refer, presumably, to the eagle with the words στὰς δ' ὑπὲρ μελάθρων, 'hovering over the towers'); the song pictures the eagle caught motionless, a static and threatening presence (φονώ-/σαισιν ἀμφιχανὼν κύκλῳ/ λόγχαις, 'gaping, encircling with its bloody spears'). The elements of the comparison—army and eagle—are conflated in the use of the noun λόγχη ('spear') with the verb ἀμφιχάσκω ('open wide the jaws') producing an image which is not easily referable either to eagle or army.[10] Then the 'eagle' is gone (ἔβα) before it fulfils its threat, leaving behind only the πάταγος Ἄρεος ('clatter of Ares'), which sound the song itself makes present by the frequent alternation of *pi*, *phi*, *tau*, *theta* and *alpha* sounds and the run of short syllables: τοῖος ἀμφὶ νῶτ' ἐτάθη/πάταγος Ἄρεος, ἀντιπάλῳ..., 'such a clatter of battle (Ares) extended behind his back, for the opponent...' (124–5). We can imagine how, through sound and image, the song freezes and transforms the action, representing the rout of the enemy not by a description of the victorious side's actions but by an image of the eagle/army which is there, and then suddenly not there, leaving behind only the sound of the song itself, which replaces the sound of the battle and gives us a way of knowing what happened.[11] We experience the armies' action in the medium of song that displaces and transforms that action. The animal imagery, now not simile but metaphor (note also the abrupt and bare use of δράκοντος, 'dragon' (126) to refer to the Theban army), and the sound of the words replace the human action. The song represents the battle as a phenomenon of nature with an order as clear as its own rhythms and sounds, not the product of human actors' will. The displacement away from the world of human actors in the antistrophe extends the picture of the beams of the sun chasing away the enemy army in the strophe; the subject of celebration goes beyond the victory itself and the soldiers who brought

[10] Kamerbeek 1978, 56 assumes that ἀμφιχανών, 'gaping', cannot refer to an eagle, but must describe a "monster with opened jaw." If we imagine the verb describing an eagle's gaping beak, the image is equally 'monstrous,' while avoiding a mixed metaphor. Griffith 1999, 147, sees both an eagle and a monster in the image.

[11] If the movement of the dance is somehow mimetic of the image of the eagle here, the point I am making becomes even clearer. In the anapaests the chorus imitates the army in its movement; in this passage its movement mimes its own description.

it about to the universal order which the chorus' song and dance make present in celebrating that victory.[12]

In the following anapaests, as before, the human agents return to the song, and the song returns to a more self-consciously mimetic representation of what has happened. Divine anger at the enemy's *hybris* is made explicit as the cause of the victory in the first words; the army's forward surge and its sound are described in a straight-forward way (ῥεῦμα, 'stream' (129) is a common way to describe the advance of soldiers, so that its metaphorical force may not even be heard);[13] and finally the army's movement narrows to the picture of an individual—Capaneus, who is not named— climbing to the top of the walls, νίκην ὁρμῶντ' ἀλαλάξαι, 'rushing to shout victory' (133), until Zeus hurls his thunderbolt at him. The human actors—though nameless—are present, their activity curbed and controlled by the god. Here again, with a limited and carefully crafted use of imagistic language, the anapaests describe the action so that we can imagine how it happened in its own time and space; once again the chorus' movement, as it marches to the anapaests, stands for what it is describing, the forward surge of the enemy army. We are given an explicit statement of divine intervention, which we are invited to take as a 'realistic' part of the description of what happened, as realistic as the description of Capaneus' movement. The chorus both describes the army's action and makes its interpretation of that action, with its emphasis on divine intervention, a part of the description, but it does not, as in the strophe and antistrophe, replace the actual event with its own song so that its representation blots out any shadow of the actual battle.

For example, instead of experiencing the sound of the Argive army's retreat in the sound of the song, as we did in the antistrophe, we are told that Capaneus was on the verge of uttering a cry of victory when Zeus' thunderbolt silenced him. The chorus' own victory song here refers to that cry with the onomatopoetic word ἀλαλάξαι, 'cry alalai'; by uttering the cry as it is describing Capaneus *not* uttering it,

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[12] Lonsdale 1993, 48 argues that "...the belief in *choreia* as a means for persuading order out of chaos led dance to become a metaphor for peace, stability, and social harmony throughout classical and Christian antiquity." I aim to demonstrate, from the evidence of the language it uses, the kind of order the chorus creates, but the more general point that dance always metaphorically represents order seems intuitively correct and central to the experience of watching human motion brought into harmony with voice and music.

[13] See Aeschylus' *Persians*, 88, 412.

the chorus marks the distance between its song and the actual event, where there was no victory cry, and allows both to be present. Thus the anapaests continue to make us aware of the act of mimesis by which the chorus transforms the action of the play in order to reinterpret it on its own terms.

In the second strophe Capaneus hits the ground with words whose sound and rhythm do seem to replace, rather than merely describe, the action (ἀντιτύπᾳ δ' ἐπὶ γᾷ πέσε ταντα λωθείς; 'he fell flat out onto the earth that struck back').[14] Once again the chorus represents the actor through metaphor, as Capaneus becomes both a Bacchant, μαινομένᾳ ξὺν ὁρμᾷ/ βακχεύων, 'with a maddened rush becoming a Bacchant', and a natural force, ἐπέπνει ῥιπαῖς ἐχθίστων ἀνέμων, 'he breathed gusts of hateful winds'.[15] The movement of the song defies the movement of events in time, as these images of Capaneus as a Bacchant and as blasts of wind follow the description of his fall to the ground and to his death. Through the rhythm, sound, and use of metaphor the chorus' song absorbs and replaces that other reality, the reality of the actual event, with its own sense of the nature and meaning of the battle and demonstrates its ability to make clear to us that nature, because its song and dance participate in a different order.

The contrast we have been tracing, between the descriptions in the anapaests, which mark the act of representation, and the lyric celebration of the power of song to substitute its own reality for the action to which it refers, carries through the rest of the parodos. The next anapaestic system (141–7) describes the very action which is the catalyst of the play—the death of Eteokles and Polyneikes—and seems to be imitating that moment in the battle; we can imagine the movement of the dance representing in some way the seven commanders facing each other. The commanders, as the human agents at the heart of the battle, have prominent place at the opening of this anapaestic system (ἑπτὰ λοχαγοὶ, 'seven commanders', 141). Yet in miming that action the chorus also creates an image of balance and order without a sense of human struggle as the cause. The matching up of the two armies,

[14] Note the repetition of 't' and 'p' sounds which create the striking sound of the body hitting the ground, interspersed with the repeated long 'a' sounds of Capaneus' cry as he falls. The dactyls get the speed of the descent with the final long-short-long-long giving us the force of the impact.

[15] As Jebb 1962, 35 says: "Capaneus, breathing fury and slaughter, is likened to a deadly tempest."

emphasized by the use of numbers in the first two lines (ἑπτὰ λοχαγοὶ γὰρ ἐφ' ἑπτὰ πύλαις/ ταχθέντες ἴσοι πρὸς ἴσους..., 'seven commanders stationed at seven gates, equals facing equals...,' 141–2), is not created expressly by a human agent: note the passive voice of ταχθέντες, 'stationed.' Numbers dominate the description of the brothers also, again implying an order separate from the messy confusion of human action and perhaps related in the chorus' mind to the order of its own music and dance:[16] ὦ πατρὸς ἑνὸς/ μητρός τε μιᾶς φύντε καθ' αὑτοῖν/ δικρατεῖς λόγχας στήσαντ' ἔχετον/ κοινοῦ θανάτου μέρος ἄμφω, 'the two who, born from one father and one mother, set their two mighty forces against each other and both got a share in a common death,' (144–7).[17] They are pictured first frozen in opposition and then dead, without ever throwing their spears. Through these features of the chorus' language we can see that, even as the chorus imitates with its movement the action of the leaders of the two armies and gives a clear description of the actual battle, the order and balance of its song and dance tend to obscure the role that human agency plays in the action it represents.

This pattern to the song culminates in the final antistrophe, where the chorus states explicitly that its dance and song now take the place of battle: ἐκ μὲν δὴ πολέμων/τῶν νῦν θέσθε λησμοσύναν,/θεῶν δὲ ναοὺς χοροῖς/παννύχοις πάντας ἐπέλθωμεν..., 'forget the battle now and let us visit all the god's temples with dances through the night,' (150–4). The movement of the strophes and antistrophes to interpret the battle, as it has been mimed in the anapaests, is a manifestation of divine order which only song and dance can make present, and significantly it ends in a celebration of the power of song itself to bring forgetfulness of the battle.

In this brief look at the parodos we have seen that the chorus transforms action into poetry—song and dance. In the anapaestic part of

[16] The rhythmic regularity of anapaests which allows them to provide a countable beat by which to orchestrate the movement of marching must in some way provide a model for the coordination of rhythm and movement in the less regular and more complicated rhythms of choral lyric. I am suggesting that we imagine those who dance to the rhythms of choral lyric coordinating their movement through some kind of 'counting' system, as is generally true of collective dance movement today.

[17] Griffith 1999, 152 translates 'after planting their twice-victorious spears in each other<'s bodies>.' καθ' αὑτοῖν...στήσαντ' seems an unlikely expression for the physical act of impaling each other, but Griffith understands a play on the act of setting up trophies, for which this expression would be suitable.

the song human actors are represented mimetically, but in the lyrics the activity of men is transformed into images belonging to the divine or natural worlds, while the song and dance metaphorically represent the order of those worlds. In singing and dancing this paean the chorus turns the battle into an act that song and dance can both represent and recreate in their own medium and explain in their own terms, according to their own logic. In the final antistrophe the chorus returns to the celebratory manner of the first strophe, calling for forgetfulness of the past and promising further dance and song as celebration in the future. What we must forget, in the chorus' view, is the war itself, its human causes and consequences; in its place we celebrate the representation of war in song, where language and movement transform the battle into a perfect form which demands our contemplation and reverence as a reflection of the universal order which only music and dance can communicate.

The audience's reaction to this song cannot be of the same kind as its reaction to the prologue. We do not weigh the pros and cons, balance the moral claims on either side of the argument, as we do with Ismene and Antigone. Rather we accept the vision and the place it gives us as humans in a universe not shaped by human desire or will. We acknowledge a design we see demonstrated in the dance and hear in the music which points to a truth outside our control. Yet we do not forget the prologue, where the act of the previous night leads not to the contained form of a poetic image or a mimed march but the question of how to act. With Creon's entrance, which follows this song, this question again becomes the center of the drama. On either side of the parodos the voices of the actors create a world where human action is fashioned by an assumption of the capacity for determining the direction and meaning of that action, while the chorus' voice and movement offer us the possibility of articulating and assenting to a different configuration of how things come to be and how humans can act in the face of them.

2) *πολλὰ τὰ δεινά: the ordering of ambiguity*

στρ. α
πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κοὐδὲν ἀν-
θρώπου δεινότερον πέλει·
τοῦτο καὶ πολιοῦ πέραν

ἀντ. α
κουφονόων τε φῦλον ὀρ-
νίθων ἀμφιβαλὼν ἄγει
καὶ θηρῶν ἀγρίων ἔθνη

πόντου χειμερίῳ νότῳ
χωρεῖ, περιβρυχίοισιν
περῶν ὑπ’ οἴδμασιν, θεῶν
τε τὰν ὑπερτάταν, Γᾶν
ἄφθιτον, ἀκαμάταν ἀποτρύεται,
ἰλλομένων ἀρότρων ἔτος εἰς ἔτος,
ἱππείῳ γένει πολεύων.

πόντου τ’ εἰναλίαν φύσιν
σπείραισι διστυοκλώστοις,
περιφραδὴς ἀνὴρ· κρατεῖ
δὲ μηχαναῖς ἀγραύλου
θηρὸς ὀρεσσιβάτα, λασιαύχενά θ’
ἵππον ὀχμάζεται ἀμφὶ λόφον ζυγῷ
οὔρειόν τ’ ἀκμῆτα ταῦρον.

στρ. β
καὶ φθέγμα καὶ ἀνεμόεν φρόνημα καὶ
ὀργὰς ἐδιδάξατο καὶ δυσαύλων
πάγων ὑπαίθρεια καὶ
δύσομβρα φεύγειν βέλη
παντοπόρος· ἄπορος ἐπ’ οὐδὲν ἔρχεται
τὸ μέλλον· Ἅιδα μόνον
φεῦξιν οὐκ ἐπάξεται·
νόσων δ’ ἀμηχάνων φυγὰς
ξυμπέφρασται.

ἀντ. β
σοφόν τι τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας ὑπὲρ ἐλπίδ’ ἔχων
ἀστυνόμους
τοτὲ μὲν κακόν, ἄλλοτ’ ἐπ’ ἐσθλὸν ἕρπει.
νόμους παρείρων χθονὸς
θεῶν τ’ ἔνορκον δίκαν
ὑψίπολις· ἄπολις ὅτῳ τὸ μὴ καλὸν
ξύνεστι τόλμας χάριν.
μήτ’ ἐμοὶ παρέστιος
γένοιτο μήτ’ ἴσον φρονῶν
ὃς τάδ’ ἔρδοι.

The stasima which follow the parodos all have as their subject the limitations of human agency.[18] The parodos prepares us to expect that the chorus’ understanding of human action will be shaped by its own way of being in the world, which is far removed from the individual’s concern with cause and effect and the kind of deliberation effective action demands. The primacy of divine causation and universal order becomes more explicit from ode to ode, but from the start it is implied in the form—the style and structure—of the songs. This is true even in the first stasimon, which seems to celebrate human agency and ignore altogether the divine world.[19] The language of this ode, even as it seems to put man at its center, calls into question his power to determine the outcome of his actions and invites us to see the limits of the actors’ assumptions.

[18] This broad generalization will be supported by the discussion of each stasimon. In general we can say further that the first and second stasima look at that limitation from the point of view of human beings experiencing it, while the third, fourth and fifth directly address and evoke the divine world as the framework for that limitation.

[19] Many critics have argued for the secular nature of this ode and its connections with the sophistic thought of Protagoras, as it is represented in Plato. So, for example, Ditmars 1992, 52: “Thus both the similarity and differences between the two accounts argue for mutual influence between Sophokles and Protagoras, or if not that then at least an awareness, on both their parts, of a topos of definite outline and general currency—which Sophocles, for his own purposes, has given a particularly ‘secular’ and fashionable intellectual treatment.” See also Heidegger 1966.

We can start our discussion, then, with the question of the ode's relevance to the episodes that surround it. We note first that it follows an episode during which Creon has taken his first action as king and the guard has described the burial of Polyneices' body, two acts which are the catalyst for the rest of the drama. It is followed by the identification of Antigone as the agent of the burial and her defense of that action. Its position seems to invite the view that the chorus is commenting directly on these seminal moments of the drama's plot, and the tendency of commentators is to hear the ode as a judgment on one or the other of the main characters. Burton, for example, comments on the particularly close relationship of the ode to the action, as it emphasizes "the absolute importance for man of respect for the laws of the land and the sanctions of divine justice if he is to reach the high end of his existence as a member of a πόλις." He sees the chorus presenting here an ideal standard for moral conduct against which the actions of Creon and Antigone seem ignorant or inadequate.[20] Others see in it a statement of the ambiguity of man's power, an ambiguity which applies to both Antigone's and Creon's actions,[21] while some have argued that the song has no relevance to the immediate situation of the play but, like a parabasis, expresses Sophokles' own feelings about what makes man great.[22] In all the discussions of the ode's relevance or non-relevance, few critics consider how the chorus' position as dancers and singers of choral lyric shapes this view of human action and how its perspective dramatizes the problem of how humans can or should respond to the circumstances of their existence.[23]

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[20] Burton 1980, 98.

[21] The most detailed discussion of the ambiguities of this ode can be found in Oudemans and Lardinois, 1987, 120–132; see also Segal, 1966, 62–85.

[22] Waldock 1951, 112 expresses this view most clearly: "Here we have one of the most famous odes of Greek tragedy, and it may seem ludicrously disrespectful to say of it that its function is to 'fill in', and yet that (in not too depreciatory a way) is its office." So also Gardiner 1987, 87–8, who understands the chorus to be avoiding the immediate moral, ethical and philosophical issues of the play here but presenting its own opinion about how to survive 'as an individual.'

[23] Ditmars 1992, 63 comes close to such a consideration in her analysis of the poetic and metrical effects of the odes, when she concludes: "The cheerful virtuosity of this showpiece will come to seem hollow in light of the developing action," a statement which acknowledges a potential disjunction between what we learn from the episodes and from the stasima. But she describes the chorus here as "shaking their heads at the act of audacity [the burial]. Like any group responding to news of a shocking nature whose implications remain unclear, they are eager to vent their opinions regardless of how much information they have. (57)" Like Gardiner, Ditmars is using choral charac-

In considering the connection between the ode and the action of the play we must consider not only the form of the song, whose stylized nature presents us with a certain kind of human response, but also the chorus' emphasis on the power and even superiority of its own form of communication. The movement of dance and the sound of song—unlike the human abilities and acts described in the ode—are a response capable of reflecting man's position in the order of things, and therefore choral song in its performance bears witness to its unique, and to the chorus, superior form of action. Most critics who look closely at the language of this ode agree that it points to the ambiguity of human power. They understand the song as a warning about the limits of Creon's or Antigone's or both characters' actions or, conversely, the chorus' understanding.[24] While I agree that the ode comments on the ambiguity of human power, its vision is not an objective or comprehensive view of the way things are, a measure against which to view the characters and action of the play. We must understand the chorus' own concerns and limits, its own partial vision, and experience the tension between the different points of view enacted within the play without dismissing one for the other. As in the parodos, the chorus' own performance asserts itself as an alternative to the clearly inadequate or problematic behaviour of the actors in the episodes. For the audience, however, the problem is not to choose one over the other but to acknowledge the necessity of both and their incompatibility.

We cannot resolve the tension that the chorus' view creates by saying that Antigone or Creon ought to know that human power is ambiguous; such understanding could only vitiate their action. Burying a brother's body or decreeing the death penalty for such an act can neither be motivated by nor intentionally express an ambiguous view of the power of human action. Rather Sophokles asks his audience to experience the disjunction between the kind of understanding and expression the chorus is capable of and the need to act in the here and now, so that they see two aspects of their experience as active members of the *polis* as both incompatible and, at the same time, equally essential.

terization here as an interpretive tool to understand the tone and impact of the song. She sees them as confirming Creon's view of the primacy of the political order.

[24] Oudemans and Lardinois 1987, for example, argue that the ode reflects the central concerns of Sophokles' tragic vision of the ambiguity of man's place in the universe. Coleman 1972, 9–10, and Müller 1967, 83 believe that the ambiguities are an ironic undermining by Sophokles of the chorus' point of view.

Examining carefully the language of the final antistrophe will clarify the nature of the chorus' understanding and of the truth it is capable of formulating.[25]

The first three stanzas, which describe human technology and its ability to manipulate the natural world, suggest an ultimate limit to humans' ability to affect their world, while acknowledging the achievement which exists within those limits. The final antistrophe turns to man's moral and ethical achievements, a subject directly relevant to the episodes which surround the song. Here the depth of the chorus' ambivalence about human action deepens, while its assertion of its own mode of affecting the world becomes more insistent.[26] As we shall see in detail, the language eschews connections of cause and effect and avoids clear definitions—both of which are aspects of effective action—, while creating its own coherence. The chorus ends with a wish or prayer, a kind of speech-act typical of the lyric mode, that it may be seen as different from ὃς τάδ' ἔρδοι, 'whoever does these things' (375). Just as song takes the place of the battle in the parodos and calls for forgetfulness of it, so here the chorus' wish not only marks its separation from certain kinds of 'doers' but also demonstrates the nature and effectiveness of its own form of action by performing a wish that brings to fruition, at the moment of articulation, the state it desires.

The final antistrophe, while marking the limits of other forms of human action, also demonstrates the nature of choral 'performance' in its syntax.[27] The first two lines expand the kind of knowledge and skill described in the previous stanzas to include the capacity for good and evil:

> σοφόν τι τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας ὑπὲρ ἐλπίδ' ἔχων
> τοτὲ μὲν κακόν, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἐσθλὸν ἕρπει. (365–7)

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[25] I take for granted the presence of ambiguity in the description of man's technical abilities in the first three stanzas. These have been thoroughly and convincingly illustrated by Coleman 1972 and Oudemans and Lardinois 1987, among others, and are even acknowledged by Hering 1985, who, however, insists on the optimistic tone of the first three stanzas.

[26] Hering 1985, 39 makes a point of the disjunction between the final antistrophe and the rest of the song: "After maintaining a fundamentally affirmative tendency up to the end of the second strophe, the ode changes direction in the second antistrophe." The ambiguities of the last antistrophe he views as the beginning of doubt in the mind of the chorus, despite its general optimism, that what is going to happen will illustrate the coherence of divine and human law.

[27] I have found Givon 1984 useful in thinking about how to understand choral syntax as a particular way of thinking.

> Having something wise, a resourceful skill, beyond expectation
> sometimes to evil, other times to good he proceeds.

The rich and detailed account of man's technological abilities in the first three stanzas has pictured him actively and energetically engaged in the struggle with the limits imposed by the natural world and his own mortality. These abilities are summed up here as σοφόν τι, 'some wise (or clever) thing.' While these words could refer to a kind of cleverness consonant with the *technai* of the previous stanzas, they also allow the possibility of a shift into a category of knowledge that includes the political, ethical and moral. The deliberate vagueness of the category implied by this phrase jars with the explicit naming of τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας, 'resourceful skill' which follows. Both phrases have the same syntax, as objects of the participle ἔχων, and allow no certainty about which is in apposition to the other.[28] The lack of precision in the syntactical or semantic relationship of the two phrases introduces an uncertainty about what the chorus wants to claim about the power of τέχνη and, more importantly, its connection to moral action.[29]

The chorus' deliberate inconclusiveness continues in the ambiguous connection between the whole participial clause, in which these words are the predicate of the participle ἔχων, and the action of the main verb, ἕρπει, 'he moves ahead' (a verb which reduces to simple movement, perhaps even slow movement, the bustling human activity of the first three stanzas.) Kamerbeek suggests "there may be some concessive-adversative force in the participle;"[30] In fact we cannot be sure whether the chorus means that man 'progresses' towards good and evil because of having, or in spite of having, this τέχνη which is also σοφόν τι. Thus

[28] Hering 1985, 36 suggests that the words σοφόν τι τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας should be heard as an accusative absolute. While I do not agree with this way of constructing the syntax, I do agree with his sense that the syntax here seems disconnected.

[29] Kamerbeek 1978, 85 translates τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας as the 'resourcefulness of his technical skill' and then translates σοφόν τι in predicate apposition as "as a thing subtle…"; Griffith 1999, 189 also understands σοφόν τι in apposition to τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας, while Jebb (n. 36), 76, translates the whole phrase as "Possessing, in his resourceful skill, a thing subtle beyond belief" and explains σοφόν τι as a predicate in apposition with τὸ μηχανόεν τέχνας. Campbell 1886, 192 translates the whole phrase "having the power of invention in art to a degree of cleverness beyond hope" and Burton 1980, 101 says "…Sophocles' words…mean that [man's] technical ingenuity is skilful or clever beyond belief." All these translations attempt to naturalize or erase the strangeness of the wording and syntax here.

[30] Kamerbeek 1978, 85.

we cannot establish a clear relationship between the movement into the explicitly moral or ethical realm of ἐσθλόν, 'good' and κακόν, 'evil,' which the main verb describes, and the possession of *techne*, whether technological or ethical, expressed in the participial clause. Furthermore, the words, τοτὲ μὲν κακόν, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἐσθλὸν ἕρπει, 'he moves sometimes to good, sometimes to evil' describe the movement towards good or evil as unguided by any principle except for the rhythm of time (τότε μὲν... ἄλλοτ'... 'sometimes... sometimes'), like the movements of a dance which are connected to each other by the rhythm of the music, which also seems to motivate them. Time, not moral understanding or choice of action, seems to lead us in one direction or the other. The vagueness and ambiguity of these syntactic relationships and the balanced randomness of τότε μὲν... ἄλλοτ'... mirror the chorus' lack of confidence in cause and effect and the human will to act as ordering principles. Yet, while the syntax is disjointed, the rhythm of these lines is clear, coherent, and regular in its movement,[31] giving the words a form much more integrated than the meaning alone would allow and implying an order which doesn't correspond to the logic of grammar, of rational thought, or of goal-oriented action.

The chorus' rhythmic control over syntax which is disjointed and semantically ambiguous asserts a kind of primacy for its own mode of action, which intensifies as the chorus continue to complicate the earlier picture of man as active agent. Now the focus is not technological but moral and political action, so that the subject of the song becomes particularly relevant to the action of the play just when the chorus most explicitly questions the power of agency. We have already noted the possible slowing of movement impled by the verb ἕρπει.[32] If we retain the verb παρείρων in the next line (368), as Wilson and Lloyd-Jones do in their Oxford Text,[33] we have a vivid expression of the reduced possibility of human action; where, earlier, man is pictured as sailing, plowing, throwing nets, etc., here he can only insert the thin thread of law into some fabric which remains undefined but is clearly not of his making: νόμους παρείρων χθονὸς/ θεῶν τ' ἔνορκον δίκαν/ ὑψίπολις, 'inserting the

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[31] Ditmars 1992, 43 describes the rhythm of the lines as xD,xD, xDxe; this analysis shows clearly the regularity and continuity of the movement.

[32] For example, Sophokles uses this verb of Philoktetes' movement (*Philoktetes*, 207). Slow movement is not, however, consistently implied by this verb. How we hear its meaning would depend in part on the nature of the choral movement that accompanies it.

[33] Their choice is well-defended in Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990, 124, although Griffith, 1999, 189 calls the defense "vain," without saying why.

laws of the land and the justice of gods, secured by oath, he is exalted in his city (or he makes his city exalted)' (368–70).[34] If he successfully performs this tenuous action, a man become ὑψίπολις. The sentence has no verb; the adjective alone constitutes the main clause. This word can mean either 'making his city exalted' or 'being exalted in the city',[35] the ambiguity being whether he is acting or acted upon. In the rest of the stanza there are no action verbs, only verbs of being, until the last word. The chorus has retreated from the picture of man acting to an assertion of the contingency and uncertainty of man's power to affect his world, while at the same time the poetry of the song is a clear demonstration of the chorus' own power to express that uncertainty.

This point can be further illustrated by looking at two chiastic constructions in the lines which address the very areas of moral action over which the characters come into conflict in the play: divine and human law, and civic and individual responsibility. The chorus sings νόμους παρείρων χθονὸς/ θεῶν τ' ἔνορκον δίκαν/ ὑψίπολις· ἄπολις ὅτῳ τὸ μὴ καλὸν/ ξύνεστι τόλμας χάριν, 'Inserting the law of the land and divine justice, secured by oath, he is exalted in his city; cityless is the one with whom what is not good resides for the sake of daring' (368–71). The mirrorlike pairing of νόμους…χθονὸς θεῶν τ' ἔνορκον δίκαν, 'laws of the land and the justice of the gods secured by oath' seems to give an ordered and stable relationship to two different kinds of justice, one human and the other divine; yet these are the very areas which are in conflict and disorder in the action of the play.[36] In the second chiasmus, which includes the whole passage quoted above (participial clause-predicate adjective/ predicate adjective-relative clause), the juxtaposition of the two predicate adjectives marks their disjunction; the person who

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[34] Wilson and Lloyd-Jones 1990, 124, paraphrase the sense as "…the man who would be high in the city will find it difficult to insert into the unbroken stream of events the narrow implement that is human law together with human justice." Note that they have had to add "into the unbroken stream of events" to fill out the chorus' meaning. The Greek does not indicate at all what man is inserting law into.

[35] See B. Knox's note on this word (Knox 1964, 185, n. 47).

[36] Coleman 1972, 9 describes "the conjunction of νόμοι and divine justice here" as having an "ironical ambiguity": "for though true, it is not true in the sense that they themselves here understand their words. They clearly do not envisage an inconsistency between the two." He sees the chorus as gullibly accepting Creon's edict as a law of the land and thus implicitly undermining its own conjunction of the two kinds of law, as Creon's edict contravenes divine law. I would see here not irony but paradox: two truths, the truth of the chorus' patterning of divine and human law and the truth of these laws' conflicting claims on the level of action, coexist, to be reconciled only in the imagination of the audience.

is ὑψίπολις ('high in the city') and the person who is ἄπολις ('cityless') are in opposition, and it would seem impossible in the order of things (and of the chorus' language) that these 'opposites' might indeed be one and the same person. Similarly the actions, expressed in the participial and relative clauses at the beginning and end of the sentence, are what distinguish these two kinds of people from each other; it would run counter to the pattern of the word order to imagine that these actions might prove to be two facets of the same action.[37] Yet both Antigone and Creon are both ὑψίπολις and ἄπολις in their different ways by the end of the play, each having in some way 'inserted law into the fabric of the city' and also acted out of 'τὸ μὴ καλόν.'[38] Whereas the episodes make problematic the relationship between the categories of divine and human law and the definition of the kind of action which benefits the city and emphasize the overlapping and conflicting nature of these definitions, the chorus places these categories and definitions into a perfectly performed pattern of words; their performance makes sense out of words which, used in another context, would only raise unanswerable questions. We might imagine that the words achieve meaning here in the way that gestures and steps achieve meaning when patterned into a dance.

The denial, in a perfectly controlled form, of the possibility of controlled or effective human action in the first part of the antistrophe is followed, at the end of the stanza, by an instance of the chorus' own form of action: μήτ' ἐμοὶ παρέστιος/ γένοιτο μήτ' ἴσον φρονῶν/ὃς τάδ' ἔρδοι, 'May he not share my hearth nor think as I do, he whoever does these things' (373–5). The act of making a wish acknowledges that man's effectiveness lies only in a kind of language that recognizes and appeals to a higher power. The chorus wishes for a clear separation of morally distinct groups into distinct mental and physical spaces;

[37] As indeed in the strophe, in the same metrical position, παντοπόρος·ἄπορος, 'resourceful; without resource,' describe the same person in different situations; the phrase following ἄπορος, ἐπ' οὐδέν 'in the face of nothing,' negates the alpha privative, allowing the negative ὑπορος to be a synonym, not an antonym, of the positive παντοπόρος. Hering 1985, 37, notes the way in which the apparently opposite words in the strophe are synonyms, while the words in the antistrophe mark a clear division. He sees the difference as an indication of a shift of tone in the final stanza. See also Heidegger 1966 on this ode, for an interesting discussion of the significance of παντοπόρος· ἄπορος and ὑψίπολις· ἄπολις.

[38] Schwinge 1971, 306 argues that the chorus' overt reference with the word ἄπολις is to Antigone, but because it has made clear that it believes the laws of the land and of the gods must be in harmony and it believes the burial might have been done by a god, it is covertly criticizing Creon here.

the act of wishing implies that it is not within man's power to achieve these kinds of moral distinctions and conjunctions. The language and movement of the chorus, however, evoke and illustrate an order that only divine power can shape in reality but one that is present in the ephemeral moment of the song's performance. Choral performance can express categories and their relationships as fixed and can appeal to a higher power to bring into being what its song and dance picture. The chorus cannot, however, participate, as Creon and Antigone do, in action which commits the agent to a particular direction, a moment of self-definition which also helps to define his or her world.

We have seen that the final antistrophe of the song describes the ambiguously effective forms of human τέχνη as leading in a loose and undefined way to moral action, which is itself almost random and haphazard in its effect; yet the chorus' expression of the uncertainty of cause and effect has itself a form which is perfectly composed and which can, through prayer, hope to make the order its composition reflects present in the world. The final words of the stasimon, ὃς τάδ' ἔρδοι, 'whoever does these things' return us to the possibility of action but only to emphasize the distance the chorus wishes to create between its mode and the mode of 'whoever acts.' The phrase itself illustrates the difference in the chorus' mind between itself and the actors by juxtaposing the generalizing force of the optative ἔρδοι and the seeming specificity of the demonstrative τάδε; the contrast reflects the distance between the specific grounding of human action in a particular time, place, and motivation (τάδε) and the chorus' own 'optative' mode which hopes to define the general categories of a clearly structured moral universe and to make its definitions true through the mode of wish and prayer.

The generalizing optative of the verb echoes the optative of the chorus' wish (γένοιτο) and allows the relative clause to be heard as part of the wish the chorus makes that it be distinguished from a general category of people. But the τάδε disrupts the generalization to point emphatically to a specific set of actions. Yet no specific actions have been described in the last stanza (remember the use of verbs of 'being' not 'doing'), and it is impossible to know what τάδε refers to. Jebb assumes the chorus has the action of burial in mind: 'The ode closes with a more direct reference to the incident which suggested its theme.'[39] This is certainly one way of making sense of the difficult

[39] Jebb 1962, 76.

demonstrative, but a way which is itself fraught with problems, since the sudden insertion in a generalizing relative clause of a direct reference to a specific act which has not been mentioned throughout the song is itself anomalous.[40] There is no way of erasing the difficulty of the demonstrative, but we may assume that Sophokles has put it there for its difficulty. The slightly bizarre phrase expresses vividly the jarring contrast between the chorus' mode of creating order and the defining force of history and the motivation of individuals involved in specific, determined actions: τάδε.

As we have seen, for the audience both views are necessary parts of the dramatic world. The chorus' voice is an integral part of the world Sophokles presents with his play. It is a voice whose power is not implicated in the ambiguities and confusions in the human world it describes and which insists on its own capacity to reflect and evoke a different reality, aligned with structures not of human making. As in the parodos, the chorus' perspective is translated into particular qualities of its language, movement, and song. When, at the end of the song, the guard leads Antigone on stage and claims she is the person responsible for the burial of Polyneices, the chorus calls her a δαιμόνιον τέρας, 'amazing vision or monster' (376), someone who confounds its understanding (ἀμφινοῶ). It makes clear eventually that it is confounded by her disobedience and foolhardiness, but initially it is her very presence, the presence of one who has defined herself and ordered her moral categories through action, which is so foreign to the chorus that it can call her a τέρας—something from another world, a thing beyond understanding.

3) *ἄτη: the consequence of action and the sequence of the dance*

στρ. α
εὐδαίμονες οἷσι κακῶν ἄγευστος αἰών.
οἷς γὰρ ἂν σεισθῇ θεόθεν δόμος, ἄτας
οὐδὲν ἐλλείπει γενεᾶς ἐπὶ πλῆθος ἕρπον·
ὥστε ποντίας ἁλὸς

ἀντ. α
ἀρχαῖα τὰ Λαβδακιδᾶν οἴκων ὁρῶμαι
πήματα φθιτῶν ἐπὶ πήμασι πίπτοντ',
οὐδ' ἀπαλλάσσει γενεὰν γένος, ἀλλ' ἐρείπει
θεῶν τις, οὐδ' ἔχει λύσιν.

[40] Jebb, ibid, clearly feels the problem and adopts the reading of most mss. (ἕρδει) to try to reconcile the generaliztion and the specific reference. His note on this passage seems full of equivocations. Kamerbeek 1978, 86 implies the difficulty of the passage with his laconic comment: τάδ' = τοιάδε, but he does not explore it further. Griffith 1999, 190 allows for both readings.

οἶδμα δυσπνόοις ὅταν
Θρῄσσῃσιν ἔρεβος ὕφαλον ἐπιδράμῃ πνοαῖς
κυλίνδει βυσσόθεν
κελαινὰν θῖνα καὶ δυσάνεμοι
στόνῳ βρέμουσιν ἀντιπλῆγες ἀκταί.

νῦν γὰρ ἐσχάτας ὑπὲρ
ῥίζας ἐτέτατο φάος ἐν Οἰδίπου δόμοις·
κατ' αὖ νιν φοινία
θεῶν τῶν νερτέρων ἀμᾷ κόνις,
λόγου τ' ἄνοια καὶ φρενῶν Ἐρινύς.

στρ. β
τεάν, Ζεῦ, δύνασιν τίς ἀν-
δρῶν ὑπερβασία κατάσχοι;
τὰν οὔθ' ὕπνος αἱρεῖ ποθ' ὁ †παντογήρως†
οὔτ' ἀκάματοι θεῶν
μῆνες, ἀγήρως δὲ χρόνῳ δυνάστας
κατέχεις Ὀλύμπου
μαρμαρόεσσαν αἴγλαν.
τό τ' ἔπειτα καὶ τό μέλλον
καὶ τὸ πρὶν ἐπαρκέσει
νόμος ὅδ'· οὐδὲν ἕρπει
θνατῶν βιότῳ πάμπολύ γ' ἐκτὸς ἄτας.

αντ. β
ἁ γὰρ δὴ πολύπλαγκτος ἐλ-
πὶς πολλοῖς μὲν ὄνησις ἀνδρῶν,
πολλοῖς δ' ἀπάτα κουφονόων ἐρώτων·
εἰδότι δ' οὐδὲν ἕρπει,
πρὶν πυρὶ θερμῷ πόδα τις προσαύσῃ.
σοφίᾳ γὰρ ἔκ του
κλεινὸν ἔπος πέφανται,
τὸ κακὸν δοκεῖν ποτ' ἐσθλὸν
τῷδ' ἔμμεν ὅτῳ φρένας
θεὸς ἄγει πρὸς ἄταν·
πράσσει δ' ὀλίγιστον χρόνον ἐκτὸς ἄτας.

In the parodos, we watched the chorus create its own form out of the description and celebration of a battle, and, in the first stasimon, we saw it express the ambiguity of human power through language which asserts its own clarity and authority. We have seen the chorus appeal to and mirror an order dependent on forces outside of human agency. Though it doesn't mention the gods explicitly in the first stasimon, its language implies a pattern that exists without the logic of cause and effect and free of the problems of unstable definition that characterize the concerns of human agents like Antigone and Creon.

This next stasimon addresses another, connected aspect of action, its groundedness in a particular time and place. Antigone's burial of her brother, which she defends in the scene prior to the second stasimon, and Creon's condemnation of her and of Ismene, which ends the scene, are central to the plot of the play and have a strong sense of particularity, of the contingencies of time and place. Throughout the episodes we are aware of the importance of time and its passing. The urgency of the right moment for action becomes most acute later in the play, at the moment when Creon chooses to bury Polyneices' body before releasing Antigone, thus failing to forestall her suicide, but the need to act and speak at the right moment and in response to what has gone before is a current running throughout the play. The chorus' notions of time and space are analogous to its experience of rhythm and movement in their song and dance. In the orchestra, movement and words follow a repeated pattern which alludes to and is part of a

series of performances stretching far back into the past and maintaining the illusion, at any rate, of a continuous tradition. This tradition participates in and appeals to the timelessness of the divine world. For the audience, of course, both temporality in action and timelessness in ritual performance are part of their lives in the polis and perhaps coexist easily in their consciousness. But the play offers the audience the possibility of experiencing the difference, and even the dissonance, in the perspectives these two concepts of time create.

Many have noted the Aeschylean allusions which characterize the second stasimon, although there is no consensus about whether Sophokles is evoking Aeschylus in agreement or disagreement.[41] Whether or not this song modifies the traditional archaic conception of ἄτη, the explicit evocation of Aeschylean tragedy asks that the song be heard in the context of a continuum of choral performance. The consciousness of being part of a tradition lends to the chorus' own performance an aspect of timelessness that contrasts with the contingencies and temporality of action. Its sense of an unchanging pattern or configuration to events is reflected not only in the content of the song but also in its form. As with the other odes we have looked at, formal aspects of the language enrich our understanding of the attitudes articulated by this song in various ways. The very first words establish the chorus' own point of view: εὐδαίμονες οἷσι κακῶν ἄγευστος αἰών./ οἷς γὰρ ἂν σεισθῇ θεόθεν δόμος, ἄτας/ οὐδὲν ἐλλείπει γενεᾶς ἐπὶ πλῆθος ἕρπον, 'Happy are those whose lives do not partake of evil, for of those whose house is shaken by the god no generation escapes the approach of ἄτη' (582–5). The chiastic pattern (predicate-relative clause; relative clause-predicate) divides humans into two exclusive and unchanging categories: those whose life is κακῶν ἄγευστος and those families who cannot escape ἄτη. Change, movement from one state to another, has no place here, as the gnomic form of this utterance implies. The world the chorus sees is not subject to the power and constraint of human history but to repeatable patterns which go on happening, as its song and dance form a continuum with past and future performances.

It is indicative of the subtlety and beauty with which Sophokles constructs the contrast between chorus and actors that the episode

[41] On the Aeschylean echoes in this ode see Ditmars 1992, 77–80 and Burton 1980, 106. Griffith 1999, 218 includes Hesiod, Solon and Herotodus in the tradition this ode alludes to.

just preceding this stasimon ends with an act by Creon which *seems* to coincide with the chorus' way of viewing the world but which is then reversed in the episode following the stasimon. Creon has implied that he intends to include Ismene, through her association with Antigone, in the punishment for the act of burial, of which she is, as the audience knows, entirely innocent. Were this act of Creon's never to be reversed the chorus' argument in this stasimon, that no member of a family ever escapes the ἄτη which besets it, would indeed be confirmed by the action of the play. But it would seem that Sophokles has included Creon's accusation against Ismene only to reverse it. At the end of the next episode Creon calls for both girls to be brought out to suffer punishment; when the chorus questions whether he intends to punish both of them,[42] Creon admits Ismene's innocence and lets her go. While this reversal is there in part to create a sense of Creon's erratic and unstable judgment, the seemingly gratuitous accusation and then unmotivated release of Ismene also serve to counterbalance the chorus' sense of patterns of family history, unchanging and all inclusive, which it expresses in the first line of this stasimon: the responsibility of an individual for a particular action has determined a different history for these two sisters. In the episodes, then, we see played out the cause and effect of human history in all its particularity and temporality, complicating for us the chorus' evocation in the second stasimon of unchanging patterns which shape human existence.

The depiction of these patterns in the song is based on a contrast between human impotence and divine omnipotence, with the chorus situating itself in between these opposites by demonstrating its power to portray both. After the initial marking of two distinct categories of people in the opening lines, the chorus uses the first two stanzas to view the world from the perspective of those whose lives are beset by ἄτη, using images which describe a confusion of categories and boundaries. These stanzas describe the effect of ἄτη on the family of Labdacus and imply, through their imagery, that these effects manifest themselves in a particular time and place and as the consequence of a

[42] I have not dealt at all in this essay with the interactions of chorus and actors in the episodes and cannot go into it here. Suffice it to say that the chorus' question to Creon here coincides with a common function of the chorus in the episodes, to draw attention to the nature of an actor's action or speech. See Reimer 1998 and Jouanna 1999 for extensive discussion of the chorus' role in the episodes of Sophoklean tragedy.

particular sequence of actions.[43] The experience of ἄτη, the confusion and disorientation it creates, is thereby connected to the process of history and those who act within it.

In the second pair of stanzas the chorus turns to the causes, rather than the effects, of ἄτη, leaving behind the perspective of those who suffer it and adopting a view that derives from the chorus' own position outside the acts which lead to it. Ἄτη becomes a manifestation of divine power and permanence, and at the same time the effects of ἄτη now describe the fate of anyone who attempts to create his own history, not just the specific case of the Labdacids. As the chorus focuses on the contrast between Zeus' power and man's confusions, the imagistic language which makes vivid the confusions of those beset by ἄτη in the first two stanzas gives way to declarative statements and clearly structured parallelisms: 606–7, οὔθ'…οὔτ'; 611–2, τὸ τ' ἔπειτα καὶ τὸ μέλλον/ καὶ τὸ πρίν; 616–7, πολλοῖς μὲν…πολλοῖς δ'. The shift in style between the two pairs of stanzas parallels the shift in perspective; the marked division reflects the chorus' own certainty about the difference between divine and human and between the timelessness of continuous patterns and the process of change and movement. The chorus' clarity and control, the skill with which its language reflects the shift in perspective, situates it outside the human disasters it describes.[44]

A close look at the language the chorus uses supports this analysis of the structure of the ode. In the first pair of stanzas, the chorus uses images to represent the effects of ἄτη.[45] The image of the sea in

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[43] Easterling 1978, 142, in her careful and close examination of the language of this ode, helpfully points out that critics are wrong to associate the history of the Labdacids as it is presented here with a family curse, of which there is no hint in these stanzas.

[44] Critics have understood the structure of this ode in various ways. Coleman 1972, 13 divides the ode into two parts, the first centered on the "demonic power" of *ate*, the second on the "specifically moral power of Zeus." Easterling 1978, 142 points out the integrity of the ode as a whole by emphasizing its ring composition; the division between the first and second parts she sees as one of "feeling and imagery", not thought. Ditmars 1992, 82–5 sees not only a disjunction between the first and second half of the song but also a sharp division between the first three stanzas and the last one, while arguing that the song as a whole is unified by its exposition of the internal and external causations of *ate*.

[45] In the *Oedipus at Colonus*, Sophokles again has the chorus use the image of a sea storm, to describe the ἄται which beset Oedipus (1239–50). The difference between the two images is telling. In the *O.C.* Oedipus is the shore against which the waves of *ate* crash in an ordered succession of directions: αἱ μὲν ἀπ' ἀελίου δυσμᾶν,/αἱ δ' ἀνατέλλοντος,/αἱ δ' ἀνὰ μέσσαν ἀκτῖν',/αἱ δ' ἐννυχιᾶν ἀπὸ Ῥιπᾶν, 'some from the setting of the sun, others its rising,/others at midday/and others from the dark

a storm pictures confusion through the obscuring of the senses and of normal boundaries. The sand is stirred up from the bottom of the sea, blurring the division between water and earth (κυλίνδει βυσσόθεν/ κελαινὰν θῖνα, 'it churns up from the depths the dark sand,' 590–1) and visibility in the water (note the emphasis on darkness : ἔρεβος (589), κελαινὰν (590). Hearing too is flooded with a sound which comes from the mingling of air (δυσάνεμοι, 591), water, and earth (ἀντιπλῆγες ἀκταί, 592).[46]

The confusion of elements and the blurring of the senses have a source associated with a particular place (Θρῄσσῃσιν…πνοαῖς, 588–9), and they happen in a particular moment, as the storm erupts. There is a sequence of events in the description: the wind moves across the surface, churns up the sand at the bottom, mixing it with the water, and the waves strike the shore. The image of the sea's confusion is therefore related to temporal and spatial movement and change. Having established in the opening three lines (582–5, quoted above) its own sense of timeless separations and continuities, the chorus goes on to describe the confusion which besets those people involved in a painful way in the events of a particular time and place.

The pattern of the first stanza is repeated in the second. It starts with a generalization about the family of the Labdacids (ἀρχαῖα τὰ Λαβδακιδᾶν οἴκων ὁρῶμαι/πήματα φθιτῶν ἐπὶ πήμασι πίπτοντ'…, 'Ancient the troubles of the house of Labdacus I see piling onto the troubles of the dead,' 594–5) which gives us, for a moment, the choral perspective of a particular family's unchanging, monochromatic history. It then moves to an image which again confounds boundaries and obscures the senses, while situating us at a particular moment: νῦν γὰρ ἐσχάτας ὑπὲρ/ῥίζας ἐτέτατο φάος ἐν Οἰδίπου δόμοις·/κατ' αὖ νιν φοινία/θεῶν τῶν νερτέρων ἀμᾷ κόνις,/λόγου τ' ἄνοια καὶ φρενῶν Ἐρινύς, 'Now over the last root of the house of Oedipus the light has spread; it the bloody dust of the gods below gathers in, and unthinking speech and the Fury of the mind,' (599–604). If, as I believe we should,

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northern peaks.' With this image the chorus evokes the inescapability and inevitability of Oedipus' suffering; by contrast the sea is used in this play to picture the turbulence such force causes in people's lives.

[46] Oudemans and Lardinois 1987, 133–5 describe these images as representing the "confusing power of nature." It is important to remember that the storm is a metaphor for the confusion which characterizes human beings, particularly their minds as we shall see, when they are undergoing a certain kind of experience—an experience which is not connected to the natural world particularly.

we keep the mss.' reading of κόνις,[47] the image the chorus uses here again mixes elements, light and earth, and represents the obscuring of vision in the context of a particular moment, as the dust of the underworld 'gathers in' (καταμᾷ) the light shining on the 'plant' which is the last of the Labdacids.[48] The verb καταμᾷ is wonderfully rich here, as it describes not only the seasonal and productive act of harvesting but also the pouring of dust (or excrement) over the head of mourners, an act also anchored in a precise time and place but with a connotation opposite to the act of harvesting.[49] This description of dust gathering in (or piling up on) the light thus serves not only to obscure the senses but also to raise the question of the act as productive or destructive. The ambiguity intensifies the confusion of boundaries by evoking, with the reference to dust and mourning, the actors' own conflict over the burial of Polyneices' body and its effect on the city.

The feeling of unclear boundaries and confusion emerges not only from the images of these two stanzas but also from certain aspects of meter and sound. The first strophe and antistrophe are the occasion for the only extended use of dactylo-epitrites in the play.[50] The unique use of this meter sets the stanzas apart and perhaps helps to convey

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[47] In this I differ from the Oxford Text.

[48] Ditmars 1992, 81 argues for the metaphor created by κόνις by noting the appropriateness of the idea of dust obscuring the light, in connection with the "clouding of judgment" of the last line of the stanza. She doesn't make the connection back to the images of the first strophe. Other critics are divided fairly evenly between the reading κόνις and κοπίς. For interesting discussions of this difficult passage see Easterling 1978, 146–9, Griffith 1999, 226, and Jebb 1962, 115.

[49] See Jebb's discussion of the verb in his Appendix, (1962, 253). He does not believe that the verb can describe dust piling up on a mourner's head rather than the mourner piling the dust up on himself (the use of the verb in Homer is in the middle voice). He quotes his own comment in his first edition: "'He pulls down a pail of water upon himself.' This operation would not be correctly described by saying, 'the pail of water pulls him down.'" If, however, we accept the primary sense of the passage as dust 'harvesting' the light, there is already an ambiguity in the use of the verb, since we can think of light being gathered in as either a positive act by analogy with harvesting crops or a negative one, if gathering in the light means creating darkness. The instability of the verb's connotation in its primary use, in a metaphor which stretches our imaginations, as does the passage as a whole, opens our minds to the possibility of hearing the secondary sense of 'piling dust (on the head of a mourner)' as another connotation of the verb stem, even when the middle form that signals that meaning is absent.

[50] In the first stasimon,the first period of strophe/antistrophe beta could be analyzed as at least verging on dactylo-epitrites. But, as Ditmars 1992, 44 says of the first stasimon, "a dactylo-epitrite movement has not been fully established, at least not enough so to term this first period." See Willink 2001, 71–73 for discussion of the metrical difficulties of these lines and possible emendations.

to the audience that the confusion which the song so vividly describes is not a characteristic choral vision. In addition, the use of different meters in the two pairs of stanzas results in a striking difference in the nature of the rhythmic units within each pair. In the first pair there are three periods, one of which contains only one colon and one of which seems not to have been marked by a pause,[51] in comparison with the six periods, clearly demarcated by pendant close followed by short anceps, of the second set of stanzas.[52] These metrical differences seem to create a contrast between the continuous, unbounded flow of the first pair and the carefully demarcated units of the second, where each colon ends in the same pattern of long-short-long-long. I would suggest that the rhythm of the first pair of stanzas replicates—within limits, of course—the absence of significant or perceptible demarcations or boundaries, like the blurring of senses and elements we have seen in the imagery. Together, rhythm and imagery vividly express the perspective of those caught up in ἄτη, without the chorus itself sharing their confusions, while the carefully marked metrical phrasing of the second pair of stanzas and the balanced declarative sentences create an audible contrast between this confusion and the divine order that the chorus is also capable of representing, as it will in the second half of the ode.

The transition between the two sets of stanzas is crucial in understanding the full impact of the second half of the song, which has been much debated. The last line of the first antistrophe extends the description of disaster to a kind of mental confusion: κόνις/ λόγου τ' ἄνοια καὶ φρενῶν 'Ερινύς, 'dust/and unthinking speech and the Fury of the mind' (603). Here the chorus seamlessly juxtaposes, whether in a list or in apposition,[53] different expressions—metaphor (κόνις....), abstraction (λόγου ἄνοια) and personification (φρενῶν 'Ερινύς)[54]—to describe the condition of those who suffer from ἄτη. While the words flow easily in the rhythms of the song and the syntax implies a definite

[51] according to Stinton 1977, 48–9.

[52] I follow Ditmars' colometry and period demarcation here (1992, 65–66).

[53] See Ditmars 1992, 81–2 on the question of grammatical connection between these words. As Griffith 1999, 226 remarks of this line: "...the interplay of human/divine, material/mental, agencies is extraordinary."

[54] Winnington-Ingram 1980, 115 feels that the use of 'Ερινύς here, because it describes a psychological state, cannot be heard as a strong personification. I do not see how representing mental distress and confusion as a fury prohibits the personification; it merely allows the source of the destruction to be understood as both the self and the divine.

relationship of the three nominatives, the chorus also mirrors the kind of mental confusion it is describing by joining together normally distinct categories of expression and leaving ambiguous the exact nature of the relationship that the connective καί's create. The chorus may be making a specific reference here to Antigone's state of mind and to what it has witnessed in the previous scene, as critics have argued,[55] but we would be wrong to limit the relevance of these words to that reference: λόγου ἄνοια and φρενῶν Ἐρινύς extend the effects of ἄτη to a mental (rather than purely physical) state and so make the transition to the second set of stanzas possible, where the chorus sings of ἄτη as a universal human condition, rather than an explanation of the specific circumstances of Antigone, and, by extension, the Labdacids.

In the second set of stanzas the ἄτη about which the chorus sings turns out to be not a step in the archaic cycle of *koros-hubris-ate* illustrated by the history of the family of Labdacus in particular but the inevitable result of any action that is the product of confident self-direction, as we shall see. The emphasis on mental confusion rather than catastrophic physical destruction, which is prepared for at the end of the first antistrophe, allows this ἄτη plausibly to describe the majority of the human race[56] and sets up the comparison which dominates the second set of stanzas between humans who act, the gods, and the chorus' own way of being in the world.

In addition to extending the effects of ἄτη to humans who act, the second two stanzas also clarify the source of ἄτη in Zeus' divine power. In doing this, they set up a clear division between the human world as a whole and the divine. In the first two stanzas the source of ἄτη is described in vague terms which reflect the limited understanding of a

[55] See, for example, Jebb's comment on this line, (1962, 115).

[56] Easterling 1978, 142 describes the development of the ode in the following way: "...the Chorus begin by using the idea of Antigone's family heritage as an explanation of her troubles...and in the second strophic pair they set these thoughts in a broader context by showing how human transgression is always helpless against the gods, who use human nature itself as a medium for the working of their punishment." This explanation leaves undefined the nature of human transgression and what aspect of human nature the gods exploit and does not explore how the particular and unusual history of the Labdacids works as an illustration of a universal kind of human transgression. So, while I agree with Easterling that there is a move from the specific case of the Labdacids to humanity in general, I feel it is necessary to define what aspect of human experience and its relationship to the divine holds true for the specific and the general case. It seems clear that the only 'transgression' that unites the experience of Oedipus, Antigone, and a large part of humanity is the assumption that humans have an active role in the shaping of events.

person caught up in this destruction: θεόθεν (584), θεῶν τις (597), θεῶν τῶν νερτέρων (602), Ἐρινύς (603). Although the references grow more and more specific and end with a personification which anticipates the specific naming in strophe b (604–10), the clarity of the reference to Zeus' power as the source of ἄτη in the second half of the song creates a deliberate and telling contrast with the vagueness and obscurity of the perception of cause in the first half. In the second two stanzas the chorus focuses not on the confusion of the human world, caught as it is in time and space, but on the timelessness and consistency of divine power (and its own vision). We have been given a glimpse of this enduring and timeless order in the first two stanzas, in the categorical statement at the beginning of the song and its chiastic patterning, and in the relentless repetition of sounds in lines 595–6: πήματα φθιτῶν ἐπὶ πήμασι πίπτοντ'/οὐδ' ἀπαλλάσσει γενεὰν γένος; but it is in the second strophe and antistrophe that the chorus articulates it fully and aligns its own song with aspects of this timeless order. The clear and expressive structure of the ode and the allusions to the choral traditions of which it is a part allow the chorus plausibly to lay claim to a kind of knowledge that is a reflection of divine clarity and permanence.

In strophe b Zeus' power is represented as timeless (οὔθ' ὕπνος αἱρεῖ ποθ' ὁ παντογήρως/οὔτ' ἀκάματοι θεῶν/μῆνες, ἀγήρως δὲ χρόνῳ... 'Neither sleep which ages all ever takes hold [of it] nor the tireless months of the gods, but unaging in time...,' 606–8).[57] On the other hand, physical movement characterizes the human world in these last stanzas: ὑπερβασία (605), ἕρπει (613), πολύπλαγκτος ἐλπίς (615) and πρὶν πυρὶ θερμῷ πόδα τις προσαύσῃ (619). Movement here may have several aspects, one being excess, but its universal and unfailing characteristic is a grounding in time and space, so that the eternity of Zeus' law (τό τ' ἔπειτα καὶ τὸ μέλλον/καὶ τὸ πρὶν ἐπαρκέσει/νόμος ὅδ', 'in the next moment, and what will be after that, and in the past, this law will hold true,' 611–3) contrasts with the movement of human activity. This contrast helps to explain how the chorus understands ἄτη in the second half of the song.

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[57] Easterling 1978, 150 defends the reading of the adjective παντογήρως modifying ὕπνος persuasively by pointing to the contrast it sets up between Zeus' eternity and the passage of time in the human world. Lloyd-Jones/Wilson's objection to her argument seems unpersuasive (1990, 130): "...even while we are awake we are getting older...". However one emends this passage (see Willink 2001, 74–75 for further suggestions) the emphasis is clearly on the timelessness of Zeus' power.

Critics have objected to the possibility that Sophokles applies Zeus' law (in the reading I prefer, οὐδὲν ἕρπει θνατῶν βιότῳ πάμπολύ γ' ἐκτὸς ἄτας, 'nothing human creeps forward in life very much outside *ate*' 613–4) universally to all human life and not just to a human life characterized by excess. Unfortunately the corruption of the text makes it impossible to be sure how the chorus formulates the law at 613–4. Those who want it to apply only to the overly prosperous read either: οὐδὲν ἕρπει θνατῶν βιότῳ πάμπολύ γ' ἐκτὸς ἄτας,[58] and take πάμπολύ as an adjective modifying οὐδέν, to describe excess; or οὐδέν' (or οὐδὲν) ἕρπει θνατῶν βιότος πάμπολυς ἐκτὸς ἄτας, where πάμπολυς modifies βίοτος to describe an 'abundant means of livelihood.'[59] To create consistency with the earlier part of the song these critics associate the group described here with those suffering from ἄτη in the first two stanzas, who are also the group described with the noun ὑπερβασία of line 605. In this way the common characteristic of these groups is their connection to excess, a reading which brings the ode into line with the archaic sense of ἄτη. By implication the chorus is then passing judgment on whoever can be characterized as excessive; some would say Creon, others Antigone, others both. Reading the adjective πάμπολυς, modifying βιότος, as a reference to an excessive, wealthy life makes this interpretation possible. However, it is hard to see how either Antigone's or Creon's 'transgressions' in the play relate to excessive wealth.

The unity of the ode becomes clearer if we understand that the second half generalizes the kind of confusion and destruction which characterizes the Labdacids in the first two stanzas to the condition of *all* human life, in comparison with the timelessness and brilliance of Zeus. Zeus' law says: nothing in a human life moves greatly or for long (i.e. very much) outside of ἄτη. With Müller I read πάμπολύ γ' as an adverb, restricting the spatial and temporal extension covered by the verb ἕρπει.[60] This reading also makes good sense of the particle

[58] using Heath's emendation; so, Jebb 1962, 118; Ditmars, 1992, 64; Oudemans and Lardionois 1987, 132, for example.

[59] This is Lloyd-Jones/Wilson's reading in the Oxford text, defended in Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990, 19f., and used by Burton 1980, 108. Both Willink 2001, 75 and Griffith 1999, 228 entertain a variety of different possibilities, without strong preference. As will become clear, I do not find a reconstruction of the text that confines the effects of êth to those who have excessive wealth easy to reconcile with the situation of Creon and Antigone.

[60] Müller 1967, 145 argues that πάμπολύ γ' cannot refer to human greatness: "Doch Menschliche Grosse welcher Art immer kann durch das rein quantitative πάμπολυ gar night bezeichnet werden." He goes on to claim the adverbial meaning: "Gemeint ist,

γέ and the position of the phrase in the sentence. The ἄτη described here is not the archaic one, the consequence of excess of wealth and ὕβρις. It is an ἄτη which brings mental distress and confusion and which arises out of the will to act: an overly assertive determination of a single direction to move in, an action performed with the expectation of being able to determine what will result from that action.

This is the excess that the chorus implies here, and it is an excess which might characterize any human being, while it particularly applies to the strong-willed actions of Antigone and Creon. The result of such actions, as far as the chorus is concerned, is the mental confusion and distress which it has described in the first two stanzas and which is reiterated here in the phrase εἰδότι δ' οὐδέν, 'knowing nothing' (618) and, τὸ κακὸν δοκεῖν ποτ' ἐσθλὸν/τῷδ' ἔμμεν ὅτῳ φρένας/θεὸς ἄγει πρὸς ἄταν, 'Evil seems to be good to the man whose mind the god leads to *ate*.' (622–4). For the chorus, it is not within human power to determine or know the outcome or consequences of an action. In this reading the last lines of strophe b, Zeus' law, anticipate the last lines of antistrophe b[61] (πράσσει δ' ὀλίγιστον χρόνον ἐκτὸς ἄτας, 'He acts (or gets along) for the shortest time outside *ate*.' 625); both generalizations claim that certain aspects of human life lead inevitably to disaster. With the emphasis on moving (ἕρπει) and doing (or getting along) (πράσσει), one of those aspects is an insistence on the primacy of time and space and a belief in a sequence of events, which give the illusion that we can determine the direction in which our action will take us.

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gewiss auch vom Autor der Konjektur, die Strecke des Weges, korrespondierend zu ὀλίγιστον χρόνον des Refrains 625." Easterling 1978, 15, dismisses this reading of πάμπολύ γ' as impossible, without giving a reason. Griffith 1999, 228 thinks the adverbial reading "unlikely," and Willink 2001, 75 objects to the "improbably lateness" of γέ. In his article on the chorus, Müller 1961, 407 argues that the chorus refers in this stasimon to the traditional view of *ate* as the consequence of overstepping boundaries, despite his interpretation of πάμπολύ γ'. Müller's claim that the chorus' traditional points of view are ironically undermined by the behaviour of Antigone recognizes the tension between episodes and odes but sees the odes merely as a foil to bring into prominence Antigone's heroism.

[61] The ms. reading here is ὀλίγοστον. The Oxford text reads πράσσει δ' ὀλίγος τὸν χρόνον ἐκτὸς ἄτας, 'the small man gets along without *ate* during his lifetime.' in order to create as a subject, the small man, and thus preserve the idea of excess as the cause of disaster. I read, with Jebb and Pearson, ὀλίγιστον τὸν χρόνον, in agreement with Easterling (as she is cited in Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990, 131) that the Oxford text's reading yields an optimistic tone out of keeping with the rest of the song.

The chorus' turn, in the final antistrophe, to the subject of hope follows naturally from the previous strophe.[62] Man, as the chorus acknowledges, needs a sense of the movement of time and change, and hope (ἐλπίς) allows the illusion (εἰδότι δ' οὐδὲν ἕρπει/πρὶν πυρὶ θερμῷ πόδα τις προσαύσῃ, 'it (hope, expectation) creeps up on one unknowing until he has scorched his foot on the hot fire,' 618–9). Man moves forward in ignorant bliss, drawing distinctions—the wrong ones, inevitably—between good and evil (τὸ κακὸν δοκεῖν ποτ' ἐσθλόν, 622), and hope accompanies his 'wanderings' (πολύπλαγκτος ἐλπίς, 615). From the choral point of view ἐλπίς describes the blind expectation that we can affect and shape the world through determined actions.[63] The image of a man who finds himself suddenly with his feet 'on fire' compellingly describes the danger which confronts anyone who is willing to determine a clear direction for his/her steps. It implicitly sets up a contrast with the confined and patterned steps of the chorus' own dance as it sings these words, a dance which 'goes' nowhere, makes no progress in a single direction. The conclusion of the antistrophe, with its use of the verb 'πράσσει' clarifies the point that, when it speaks of 'ἐλπίς' and, 'ἔρως' the chorus is speaking of the human expectation that one can affect one's world and achieve one's desires willfully. Hope understood in this way can apply equally well to Antigone and to Creon, as the ἄτη of the first three stanzas can apply to Creon as well as Antigone. But, rather than confining the ode's relevance to one or the other or both characters, one must acknowledge the chorus' attempt to draw a more generalized distinction between the confusion that characterizes an active human life in the world and the clearer, more detached perspective humans gain from the attempt to reflect upon an order they do not create.

[62] Critics who see the ode up until the final antistrophe as refering only to Antigone see a shift of the chorus' attention here to Creon, since the emphasis on *elpis* doesn't seem to fit Antigone's case as the chorus presents it earlier in the ode.

[63] "The fundamental problem for man's insight is that it is the expression of an excessive power and therefore tends to undermine its own order. This excessive power is the power of hope." (Oudemans and Lardinois 1987, 137) These critics see what happens in the episodes as a confirmation of this understanding of the world. It seems to me questionable whether Sophokles invites the audience to judge the actions of the characters, as the chorus does, as a manifestation of *elpis* rather than carefully reasoned expressions of human agency necessary for human society. That these actions are, from another point of view, foolishly optimistic about human power makes them no less crucial.

That the chorus aligns its own song with divine omniscience and permanence we have already suggested at various points in the discussion of this ode. It remains to examine a little further on what basis it makes this claim. The ode is framed at beginning and end by two gnomic statements (583–5, 620–25), the second of which is marked as belonging to an anonymous oral tradition of 'wisdom sayings': σοφίᾳ γὰρ ἔκ του/κλεινὸν ἔπος πέφανται..., 'with wisdom from some voice the famed saying is revealed...' (620–21). The two categorical and definitive statements framing the ode oppose the images of mental confusion within it and mark the chorus' song as confidently grounded in timelessness and permanence. At the heart of the chorus' understanding of why human action cannot lead to a humanly determined end lies its recognition of the inability to define clearly the terms good and evil, a concern that the chorus has voiced in the previous stasimon. The tradition out of which the chorus sings and dances and *its* wisdom, dependent as it is on a viewpoint which transcends the individual's capacity to understand, recognizes the unchanging omniscience of Zeus and is the closest humans can come to that kind of clarity.

This quality of the chorus' song gains authority not only from what it says but how it says it. In the final two stanzas both sound and rhythm add to the assertive clarity of the chorus' performance. We have noted above the difference in the demarcation of metrical units between the first and second pairs of stanzas. In the second pair, as Ditmars has pointed out,[64] every line except one (612/623) ends with long, short, long, long. The periods are shorter, more frequent, and clearly demaracted; the strophe and antistrophe end with the same words ἐκτὸς ἄτας. The alliteration of πρὶν πυρὶ θερμῷ πόδα τις προσαύσῃ (619) recalls the alliteration of line 595 (πήματα φθιμένων ἐπὶ πήμασι πίπτοντ'), the repetition of sound linking the specific suffering of the Labdacids and the general suffering of man and giving force to the chorus' perception of the human condition. The form of song both makes manifest and transcends this condition by the control and strength of its diction, meter and sound patterns.

This stasimon, then, describes aspects of human existence which arise out of the desire to act and which, in the chorus' view, also invite destruction: time as a measure of change, active movement with its direction controlled by human desire, and the possibility of definition

[64] Ditmars 1992, 75.

and the drawing of distinctions as the basis for determining a given act at a given time by a given individual. In the chorus' world of song and dance, time and movement do not lead to change but the expression of what is lasting and permanent. The chorus characterizes the actors, the participants in this drama and in any act, as deceived by ἐλπίς, the expectation that what they are doing will have the effect they intend, their desire to shape the world by their action a κουφονόος ἔρως.

4) *Hymn to Eros: the appeal of the divine*

στρ. α
Ἔρως ἀνίκατε μάχαν
Ἔρως ὃς ἐν κτήμασι πίπτεις,
ὃς ἐν μαλακαῖς παρειαῖς
νεάνιδος ἐννυχεύεις,
φοιτᾷς δ᾽ ὑπερπόντιος ἔν τ᾽
ἀγρονόμοις αὐλαῖς·
καί σ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ἀθανάτων φύξιμος οὐδεὶς
οὔθ᾽ ἁμερίων σέ γ᾽ ἀν-
θρώπων, ὁ δ᾽ ἔχων μέμηνεν.

ἀντ. α
σὺ καὶ δικαίων ἀδίκους
φρένας παρασπᾷς ἐπὶ λώβᾳ·
σὺ καὶ τόδε νεῖκος ἀνδρῶν
ξύναιμον ἔχεις ταράξας·
νικᾷ δ᾽ ἐναργὴς βλεφάρων
ἵμερος εὐλέκτρου
νύμφας, τῶν μεγάλων πάρεδρος ἐν ἀρχαῖς
θεσμῶν· ἄμαχος γὰρ ἐμ-
παίζει θεὸς Ἀφροδίτα.

In the following episode the actors' intense exploration of the nature of their actions reaches its peak in the confrontation between Creon and Haimon. The argument of father and son revolves around the responsible and appropriate use of human power and ends in their irreconcilable opposition to each other. After Haimon leaves, however, Creon revises his orders: he releases Ismene and changes Antigone's punishment from public stoning to live burial. The debate has shifted Creon's sense of what he can, or should, do. The episode thus dramatizes in various ways the process by which action takes shape. Although the confrontation between father and son revolves around the difference in their views of the responsible use of power—whether in relationships between ruler and ruled, men and women, or fathers and sons—, the belief that one can choose how to use power is common to both. Creon assumes that Haimon could choose to support him instead of Antigone, and Haimon believes that his father can become a different kind of ruler, if he so chooses.

It is jarring, therefore, when the chorus, in direct response to this intense collision of wills and its aftermath, sings a seemingly irrelevant hymn to the god Eros, marking his supremacy over human and even

divine will. Haimon has not made his desire for Antigone an issue in the argument (although Creon's accusations that Haimon is allying himself with a woman implies that desire). Yet the chorus, ignoring the nature of the political and philosophical disagreement between father and son, sees in their argument a manifestation of desire.[65] Its reaction may be inspired in part by the emotional intensity of the scene, but its response to the conflict must also strike us as an evasion of the complex reasoning about right and wrong action which Creon and Haimon have been struggling with. The perspectives of chorus and actors seem so completely at odds that many critics view the ode as an escape, an interlude to soothe our emotions. But perhaps, instead, the song is designed to challenge us by offering, in a pure and distilled form, another way of seeing, a choral vision we have already seen them articulate and embody in the two preceding stasima. It is not an accident that the chorus' most 'lyric' moment follows a scene in which the actors engage in their most intense debate about their own actions.[66]

In effect the previous scene has confirmed for the chorus the validity of its condemnation of the ἀπάτα κουφονόων ἐρώτων, 'the deceit of lightheaded passions' (617) in the previous stasimon. That driving passion which deceives men into believing that they can determine where they are going, is hymned, in this song, as the god Eros, the orderer of

[65] Burton 1980, 113 argues that Haimon has deliberately not mentioned his love for Antigone in the previous scene and that the chorus supplies that unspoken motivation for the audience here. Ditmars 1992, 98–99 objects to this interpretation because she feels that Haimon has nowhere been characterized as one who would want to use his love for Antigone as motivation for his action. She prefers to follow Jebb and see the chorus as apologizing for Haimon's behaviour by evoking Eros' power, in the hopes that "overwrought emotions"—its own, Creon's, the audience's—will be soothed. Seeing the hymn as an attempt at calming nerves allows us "not [to] attempt to probe any more deeply [the chorus'] understanding of the interchange between father and son." In these interpretations the notion that the chorus works as a kind of apologist or misguided peacemaker for the characters seems out of keeping with its role in the rest of the play.

[66] Ditmars 1992, 89 suggests another purpose for the ode besides the emotional one mentioned in n. 65. She argues that this ode is "a final stage in a development of ideas and musical form from ode to ode which is still to some extent independent of the action." The ideas being developed in the odes she describes as "the tragic knot," the random and inexorable power of external influences on human lives. It is hard to see how this development of a more and more explicit statement of the powers controlling human life, like *ate* and *eros*, is independent of the action rather than a carefully structured complement to it, with the dynamic between the two creating the overall effect of the play.

disorder in the universe.[67] Eros, who ignores distinctions between beast and fish (785–6) and man and god (787–790), erases divisions between the just and the unjust (791–2), and divides the unities of family connections (793–4), represents in his universal invincibility (781, 799–80) the order paradoxically present in the kind of disorder we have witnessed in the previous scene. The chorus' song makes real that order, even as we are embroiled in the chaos that Creon's and Haimon's passions have exposed us to.

The language of the ode clearly emphasizes the sexual manifestations of Eros' power. If we assume that the chorus adopts an actor's view of cause and effect, the prominence of the sexual manifestations of eros is puzzling. It seems to locate the sole cause for the argument between Creon and Haimon in Haimon's passion for Antigone, ignoring the substance of their disagreement. But the purpose of the chorus' celebration of Eros is not simply to identify or explain the cause of Creon's and Haimon's quarrel. In describing desire (ἵμερος, 796) as τῶν μεγάλων πάρεδρος ἐν ἀρχαῖς/θεσμῶν, 'sharing the seat of power with the great laws' (797–9), the chorus invites us to view eros not through the limited scope of particular cases but as an immutable and universal law whose nature it chooses to illustrate through the example of sexual passion.[68] The obliteration of boundaries, the singleness of vision—the madness—that are the attributes of 'ἵμερος' are equally present in other forms of passion and are the clear manifestations of the god's presence. Though Haemon's sexual passion may be one aspect of Eros' power in the last scene, the chorus sees the god's presence also in Creon's attitude towards his own power and in the struggle over whose words carry authority. Just as Eros obliterates distinctions that are normally evident in our lives, so the chorus sees all forms of passion as essentially the same. The hymn recognizes the universal nature of passion and celebrates its power, using the sexual as an immediately comprehensible

[67] As Oudemans and Lardinois 1987, 141 put it, "Eros is typically a power which both underlies and undermines order."

[68] Willink 2001, 77–78 suggests reading ἐκτός for πάρεδρος, on grounds of both meter and sense. He cites Griffith's argument that eros destroys rather than cooperates with the great laws and point to the chorus' statement at 801, [ἐ]γὼ καὐτὸς θεσμῶν ἔξω φέρομαι, as evidence that the chorus has earlier spoken of eros as ἐκτὸς θεσμῶν. While the chorus understands the effect of eros as carrying people outside the order, eros itself must be acknowledged as part of the order. The metrical argument against a resolved choriamb is not absolute, as Willink acknowledges, and any emendation of the passage yields difficult sense.

example. It implies, by calling on the god in the aftermath of the argument, that the conflict is an instance of Haimon and Creon confusing the power of the god with their own. Their conflict arises from their passionately held points of view, which they struggle to find language for and with which they attempt to direct each other's actions. In this battle of political and philosophical convictions the chorus sees the presence of Eros.

The god's universality is mirrored in the hymn's uncompromising and unanswerable simplicity. Its rhetorical power—like the power of the god—leaves no room for equivocation. At the moment when the contrast between episode and stasimon is most jarring, Sophokles has turned to a traditional form of choral lyric, the hymn, giving it a remarkably straightforward, simple form. There are no special effects.[69] Rather we hear clearly the characteristics of the genre: the direct address to the god, the naming of his sphere of influence, and his power. The language displays the insistent effects of alliteration, assonance, and verbal repetitions, all in a simple, regular rhythm. As Ditmars comments, "the most remarkable character of the third stasimon is its lack of character, in relation to the other odes in the play, all of which have more conspicuous rhythmic patterns"; she describes its tone as 'quiet and enchanting.'[70]

To my ear the song's simplicity is triumphant, as the congruity of form and content, describing and containing Eros' power, fittingly celebrates the god's presence. In honoring the god with a song whose simplicity is in stark contrast to the disruptions and complications of the previous scene, the chorus demonstrates the power of its song to find form in chaos, just as Eros is the 'form' that operates in the chaos of human passion. The ode demonstrates the chorus' ability to discover and address that order and create a human response to it with its performance, in contrast to the unresolved and disturbing debate of the previous episode. As we shall see, all the remaining songs of the chorus use these straight-forward lyric forms, which serve to crystallize the

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[69] One possible special effect of this hymn is the absence of any request in connection with the evocation of the god (Burton 1980, 113). The naming of the god's power is enough because the chorus is not trying here to influence the events of the play; in the next ode a different god will not only be evoked but also requested to intervene in the action.

[70] Ditmars 1992, 90; 95.

difference between its perspective and the actors', widening and fixing the gap, even when the actors themselves are moved to song.[71]

If we accept the chorus' song as an alternative way of understanding the violence of the preceding scene, by understanding human strife as a manifestation of the god's order, the price we pay for this 'consolation' is recognizing the futility of the actors' attempts to generate ordering principles and significant definitions for themselves out of their conflicts and suffering. The actors' order—the order of history, of narrative, of growth and change from generation to generation, struggled for and defined by an increase in understanding and knowledge—is, in the chorus' eyes, a futile effort. To bring out these differences Sophokles frames the chorus' view on either side by two moments which reveal an opposing perspective. The episode prior to the hymn ends with Creon's issuing new orders, after Haimon leaves. Here we witness the immediate effect of Haimon's words on Creon, and the way human actions are shaped by reason (Haimon has told Creon that the citizens will not stone Antigone, so he changes the nature of her punishment) and history (Creon frees Ismene, acknowledging that she had no part in the burial of Polyneices). 'Orders' here are based on the human 'order' of the collective and individual will and on change as part of that order. The hymn is framed on the other side by the kommos, where Antigone joins the chorus in song. With it, however, she expresses an entirely different point of view about the nature of that song: for her it is an expressive way of preserving the particularities of her story.

5) *A Lyric Dialogue: challenge and response*

στρ. β	ἀν τ. β
ἈΝΤ. ὁρᾶτέ μ', ὦ γᾶς πατρίας πολῖται τάν νεάταν ὁδὸν	ἈΝΤ. ἤκουσα δὴ λυγροτάταν ὀλέσθαι τὰν Φρυγίαν ξέναν

[71] Kitto 1956, 166 views the hymn to Eros as part of a single lyric movement which ends with the fourth stasimon. Ditmars 1992, 89 feels that the third and fourth stasimon and the kommos are a single unit, establishing the lyric mode at the center of the play's climax: "Things happen differently in the two modes of tragedy, and if this play gives prominence to lyric its whole meaning will be affected thereby." In her view there is no distinction between the lyric of the chorus and of the actors; the latter simply take over song from the former, relegating the chorus to onlookers. A close look at the kommos and fifth stasimon, however, will reveal the degree to which actors and chorus use song differently, so that it is hard to see the movement from choral song to monody as linear or continuous.

στείχουσαν, νέατον δὲ φέγ-
γος λεύσσουσαν ἀελίου,
κοὔποτ' αὖθις· ἀλλά μ' ὁ παγ-
κοίτας Ἅιδας ζῶσαν ἄγει
τὰν Ἀχέροντος
ἀκτάν, οὔθ' ὑμεναίων
ἔγκληρον, οὔτ' ἐπὶ νυμ-
φείοις πώ μέ τις ὕμνος ὕ-
μνησεν, ἀλλ' Ἀχέροντι νυμφεύσω.

ΧΟ. οὔκουν κλεινὴ καὶ ἔπαινον ἔχουσ'
ἐς τόδ' ἀπέρχῃ κεῦθος νεκύων.
οὔτε φθινάσιν πληγεῖσα νόσοις
οὔτε ξιφέων ἐπίχειρα λαχοῦσ',
ἀλλ' αὐτόνομος ζῶσα μόνη δὴ
θνητῶν Ἀίδην καταβήσῃ.

Ταντάλου Σιπύλῳ πρὸς ἄ-
κρῳ, τὰν κισσὸς ὣς ἀτενὴς
πετραία βλάστα δάμασεν,
καί νιν ὄμβροι τακομέναν,
ὡς φάτις ἀνδρῶν,
χιών τ' οὐδαμὰ λείπει,
τέγγει δ' ὑπ' ὀφρύσι παγ-
κλαύτοις δειράδας· ᾇ με δαί-
μων ὁμοιοτάταν κατευνάζει.

ΧΟ. ἀλλὰ θεός τοι καὶ θεογεννής,
ἡμεῖς δὲ βροτοὶ καὶ θνητογενεῖς.
καίτοι φθιμένῃ μέγα κἀκοῦσαι
τοῖς ἰσοθέοις ἔγκληρα λαχεῖν
ζῶσαν καὶ ἔπειτα θανοῦσαν

στρ. γ
ἈΝΤ. οἴμοι γελῶμαι.
τί με, πρὸς θεῶν πατρῴων,
οὐκ οἰχομέναν ὑβρίζεις,
ἀλλ' ἐπίφαντον;
ὦ πόλις, ὦ πόλεως
πολυκτήμονες ἄνδρες·
ἰὼ Διρκαῖαι κρῆναι Θή-
βας τ' εὐαρμάτου ἄλσος, ἔμ-
πας ζυμμάρτυρας ὔμμ' ἐπικτῶμαι,
οἵα φίλων ἄκλαυτος, οἵοις νόμοις
πρὸς ἕρμα τυμβόχωστον ἔρ-
χομαι τάφου ποταινίου·
ἰὼ δύστανος, βροτοῖς
οὔτε ⟨νεκρὸς⟩ νεκροῖσιν
μέτοικος, οὐ ζῶσιν, οὐ θανοῦσιν.

ΧΟ. προβᾶσ' ἐπ' ἔσχατον θράσους
ὑψηλὸν ἐς Δίκας βάθρον
προσέπεσες, ὦ τέκνον, ποδί.
πατρῷον δ' ἐκτίνεις τιν' ἆθλον.

ἀντ. γ
ἈΝΤ. ἔψαυσας ἀλγει-
νοτάτας ἐμοὶ μερίμνας
πατρὸς τριπολίστου οἴτου
τοῦ τε πρόπαντος
ἁμετέρου πότμου
κλεινοῖς Λαβδακίδαισιν.
ἰὼ ματρῷαι λέκτρων ἆ-
ται κοιμήματά τ' αὐτογέν-
νητ' ἐμῷ πατρὶ δυσμόρου ματρός·
οἵων ἐγὼ ποθ' ἁ ταλαίφρων ἔφυν·
πρὸς οὓς ἀραῖος ἄγαμος ἅδ'
ἐγὼ μέτοικος ἔρχομαι.
ἰὼ δυσπότμων κασί-
γνητε γάμων κυρήσας,
θανὼν ἔτ' οὖσαν κατήναρές με.

ΧΟ. σέβειν μὲν εὐσέβειά τις,
κράτος δ', ὅτῳ κράτος μέλει,
παραβατὸν οὐδαμᾷ πέλει,
σὲ δ' αὐτόγνωτος ὤλεσ' ὀργά.

ἐπ.
ἈΝΤ. ἄκλαυτος, ἄφιλος, ἀνυμέναι-
ος ⟨ἁ⟩ ταλαίφρων ἄγομαι
τὰν ἑτοίμαν ὁδόν.
οὐκέτι μοι τόδε λαμπάδος ἱερὸν
ὄμμα θέμις ὁρᾶν ταλαίνᾳ·
τὸν δ' ἐμὸν πότμον ἀδάκρυτον
οὐδεὶς φίλων στενάζει.

That the kommos can be seen, in part, as a struggle between the chorus and Antigone to control the use of song is established by the chorus' words on seeing Antigone enter: νῦν δ' ἤδη 'γὼ καὐτὸς θεσμῶν/ἔξω φέρομαι τάδ' ὁρῶν..., 'Now indeed I too am carried outside the norms, when I see these things...'(801–2).[72] The *thesmoi* outside of which the chorus is carried by the sight of Antigone have been understood to be Creon's laws,[73] but it seems also possible that the chorus refers here to the traditions of its own song, which cannot in the end adequately address what is happening to Antigone, so that, for the moment, their only response is tears. The chorus says that it sees her τὸν παγκοίταν...θάλαμον...ἀνύτουσαν, 'reaching the (bridal) chamber where all lie' (804–5). Their picture of her here as a bride connects her appearance with the hymn to Eros which the chorus has just sung, but the conflation of marriage and death in her case also makes the hymn suddenly inappropriate to the chorus' ears. For a moment it acknowledges the inadequacy of its own *thesmoi*, though it will soon reassert their necessity.

While the chorus attempts initially to offer Antigone the consolation of fame (817–8), the disparity between its own and Antigone's view of her life and death limits its ability to console her[74] and instead intensifies the opposition between actor and chorus, even as their voices meet in the exchange of song.[75] The interplay between the two involves a

[72] For a very different reading of the *kommos* based on the view that the chorus is a character motivated by fear of Creon, see Schwinge 1971, 314–8. He argues that the chorus throughout the *kommos* tries to comfort Antigone, while also protecting itself against Creon's anger.

[73] Griffith 1999, 266 notes the comparison between the chorus' sense here of being 'outside the city's laws' and its description of the effect eros has, in the previous stasimon. He calls the parallel it draws between its pity and Haimon's love "startling." Although the verbal echo, if we accept Griffith's reading of the text, is certainly there, I wonder if the chorus is responding here to the sight of Antigone, who has acted against the laws of the city and whose fate is certainly "outside the norms." As I will suggest, the chorus' reaction to the sight of her is to be carried outside the norms of its own song, which is inadequate to express Antigone's fate through the patterns it demonstrates. As usual, I am suggesting a reading which looks not at the emotional tone of the moment, which is of course also in play, but at the structural shape of the play.

[74] McDevitt 1982, 134–144 agrees that the chorus fails utterly to understand Antigone here; he describes its misunderstanding as a failure to imagine what Antigone's "living death" entails and a stubborn loyalty to Creon's point of view.

[75] The difference in meter between the chorus' part in the kommos and Antigone's emphasizes the fact that, though the voices join together, they remain separate in their use of song. As Griffith 1999, 260 comments: "the epirrhematic structure helps to underline the participants' different states of mind." He sees that difference as a contrast

complicated struggle over the proper terms by which to define and express Antigone's fate. The chorus insists that what is happening to her is the result of her lack of understanding of the immutable patterns of human life, which choral song celebrates. Antigone, as she sings, attempts to adapt those patterns to reflect and preserve the story of her unique experience.

Antigone initially picks up the strain of the chorus' hymn to Eros to sing her own bridal/funeral hymn. In doing this she attempts to adapt a traditional form to tell her highly unusual story, which she formulates as a 'rite of passage.'[76] In this way she adapts a common pattern to a particular, unique event, in an attempt to memorialize it. She presents herself (ὁρᾶτέ μ', 'look at me' (806)) as both paradigm of the unwed girl whose wedding is her funeral and as the unique case of a living body being treated as dead. Her repeated use of νεάταν/ -ον((807, 808) captures this duality: her journey is 'last' and 'newest,' at the same time one of a series and the beginning of something else. So does, more subtly, her singing of the ὕμνος that she says will never be sung: οὔθ' ὑμεναίων/ ἔγκληρον, οὔτ' ἐπὶ νυμ-/φείοις πώ μέ τις ὕμνος ὕ-/μνησεν.., 'neither sharing in the wedding song nor at my wedding has anyone sung my wedding hymn' (813–16). The traditional bridal song has not been sung for her, but the song she is singing now takes its place, serving the function of both a bridal song, by picturing her death as a marriage to Acheron (Ἀχέροντι νυμφεύσω, 816), and a commemoration of her particular story, as she describes it in her solitary song. Her own 'new' song takes the place of the traditional lament, stretching the traditional form and expressive power of song to incorporate both the pattern and the unique event. To do this is to adapt and transform the mode of song that the chorus has so thoroughly embodied up to this point.

The chorus in response insists on Antigone's uniqueness, while granting her glory and praise (817–22). With the words κλεινή and ἔπαινον ἔχουσ' (817) it acknowledges her as the subject of song,[77] but a unique

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between Antigone's desolation and the chorus' mixture of sympathy and criticism. See Ditmars 1992, 118–119 for an analysis of the metrical structure of the kommos.

[76] See Ditmars, ibid., 109–115, for a discussion of the kommos as a kind of rite of passage.

[77] I keep the mss. reading οὐκοῦν, despite Lloyd-Jones/Wilson's support of Denniston's argument for reading οὔκουν here and making the sentence interrogative (1990,136). Griffith 1999, 268 sees little difference between οὐκοῦν and οὔκουν but argues for the interrogative. To my ear, the argumentative 'therefore' fits the chorus' tone here better than the softer 'are you not…?'

song: αὐτόνομος (821). This word, with its pun on νόμος as both law and melody,[78] makes brilliantly clear the chorus' refusal to accept either Antigone's unique song or her action as the subject of its own song. By implication, Antigone's lament will not become part of a tradition but will last only as long as *her* voice is there to sing it. The reason for the isolation of her voice is her choice to compose her own νόμος; this choice has led to her unique form of death (ζῶσα μόνη δὴ/θνητῶν Ἀίδην καταβήσῃ, 'living, alone among mortals, you will descend to Hades 821–2), which requires a unique song.[79]

The chorus' insistence on the unparadigmatic nature of her story evokes from Antigone the paradigm of Niobe, whose imprisonment and sorrow are eternally represented by the rock which, like ivy, grew over her and by the rain and snow which symbolize her eternal tears.[80] Her use of the *story* of Niobe (ἤκουσα...823;...φάτις ἀνδρῶν, 829) to explain her own fate keeps alive the possibility of combining the unique and paradigmatic in song. While she has just finished singing of her virginity and her unusual marriage to Acheron, which puts her own plight in stark contrast to Niobe's, whose story emphasizes her motherhood (though the contrast exists on a continuum of fertility/barrenness), she also marks their similarity: the encasement in rock. The Niobe paradigm thus works for the subject of Antigone's song by calling attention to both difference and identity; by the use of an established story that both fits and doesn't fit her own, Antigone defiantly insists that the uniqueness of her death can be absorbed into and preserved by a song with a past and a future.

The chorus invalidates the comparison by defining the absolute difference which it sees between Niobe and Antigone: the one is of immortal ancestry, the other mortal (ἀλλὰ θεός τοι καὶ θεογεννής,/ἡμεῖς δὲ βροτοὶ καὶ θνητογενεῖς, 'but [she was] a god, of divine ancestry, but we are mortals, born of men,' 834–5). For Antigone Niobe's story captures the ambiguous and painful nature of her position as 'living dead' and bride of Acheron, but for the chorus the application of the

[78] This is the first preserved appearance of the word.

[79] McDevitt 1982, 136 suggests that this offer of praise, based on the unique form of her death, is an attempt at consolation by the chorus. What the chorus offers Antigone here, however, is a limited acknowledgement of her unique situation, not the consolation of incorporating her story into a continuing tradition of song, as the rest of the kommos makes clear.

[80] Winnington-Ingram 1980, 139–140 argues that it is the thought of living death, just mentioned by the chorus, which gives Antigone the paradigm of Niobe.

paradigm of Niobe to Antigone violates the exclusive division between immortal and mortal, and therefore between a song which preserves Niobe's story and the song Antigone sings now, to mark the particular moment of her death. Eternal mourning, an actual 'living death,' is possible for Niobe because she belongs to the unchanging world of the immortals, as does her story; the way Antigone, a mortal, is spoken of will maintain the distinction between life and death, despite the confusing circumstances of her burial. So the chorus grants Antigone some similarity to Niobe (ἰσοθέος, 837), while 'normalizing' her death by talking of her as if she is, in effect, already dead (φθιμένῃ, 836), and insisting that the stages of life and death are separate, even in her case: (ζῶσαν καὶ ἔπειτα θανοῦσαν, 'living and then dead', 838).

In this way the chorus rejects the possibility that her story can be told to posterity by reference to the undying song about Niobe's ambiguous fate. It insists on the incongruence between the unique aspect of Antigone's experience, the blurring, for a moment, of life and death, which earns her recognition now, and the lasting use of song to preserve principles of order, one of which is the immutable division between man and god and, for mortals, life and death. Antigone encroaches upon the chorus' role by invoking a mythological paradigm to preserve the uniqueness of her situation, giving it a broader, lasting context. For the chorus this is an improper use of song, whose function is to perpetuate the paradigmatic not the unique, the permanent patterns, not the contingencies of history. The chorus, by singing of her, also actively renders her part of the immortal world of song but on its own terms.

Antigone's reaction to the chorus' rejection is strongly stated: οἴμοι γελῶμαι./τί με, πρὸς θεῶν πατρῴων,/οὐκ οἰχομέναν ὑβρίζεις,/ἀλλ' ἐπίφαντον; 'Alas I am mocked. Why, by the gods of my ancestors, do you not do violence to me once I am gone, not to my face?' (838–41).[81] She

[81] Critics have struggled to explain the intensity of Antigone's reaction here. Winnington-Ingram 1980, 140 suggests that it is "the mention of life and death that stings her, makes her feel that she is being mocked and insulted." Coleman 1972, 17 sees in her reaction an unusual sensitivity inspired by her new loss of confidence, a psychological explanation with which Ditmars 1992, 116 agrees, adding that the chorus is simply being inept in their consolation, with no intention to insult. Burton 1980, 119 feels that Antigone is insulted by the promise of fame after death when what she wants is sympathy and confirmation that her behaviour is just. McDevitt 1982, 139–40 sees Antigone's indignation as directed at the way the chorus acknowledges the limited appropriateness of the Niobe paradigm by separating Antgone's life and death into two stages: she will get fame, like Niobe, for her death, which is like Niobe's in being a punishment for hybris, but in life Niobe's fame stemmed from her fecundity, for which

accuses the chorus of doing her violence (με…ὑβρίζεις). Her intense reaction comes, in part, from the chorus' refusal to acknowledge the validity of her song. The attempt to silence—or at least adjust—her song, in her presence and therefore, necessarily, while she is performing it, isolates her voice and threatens to frustrate her attempt to preserve her story in the form she wishes. So Antigone defiantly calls upon all of Thebes—citizens, streams, and trees—to be witnesses (ξυμμάρτυρας, 846) to her story. As witnesses they are to preserve both the paradigmatic force of her experience, emphasized in her use of the relative pronoun οἷος (οἵα φίλων ἄκλαυτος, οἵοις νόμοις…ἔρχομαι…… 'the kind of woman, unwept by friends, I am, because of what kind of laws…I go…', 847–9), and the memory of her unique death (848–52), in defiance of the chorus. Once again the punning use of νόμος asserts the connection between the nature of her story and her song. She corrects the chorus' very words, when she sings οὐ ζῶσιν οὐ θανοῦσιν, 'not with the living not with the dead' (in place of the ζῶσαν καὶ ἔπειτα θανοῦσαν, 'living and then dead' of 838), and in so doing emphasizes the anomaly of her own fate. Antigone insists on the use of song to create new patterns out of the unique circumstances of the play's action; she exposes both the limitation and force of the chorus' use of song to preserve the traditional and divinely sanctioned order. This struggle between different voices continues throughout the kommos, giving it the feel of a lyric competition.

The chorus shifts from anapaests to syncopated iambs to offer (and quote) its own song in response to Antigone's call for witnesses to her own:

> προβᾶσ' ἐπ' ἔσχατον θράσους
> ὑψηλὸν ἐς Δίκας βάθρον
> προσέπεσες, ὦ τέκνον, ποδί.
> πατρῷον δ' ἐκτίνεις τιν' ἆθλον. (853–6)
>
> You have gone forward to the furthest point of boldness
> and have collided with the high throne of Justice, child.
> You pay the price of torment, come from your father.

Antigone's life can supply only an antithesis. His reading is similar to mine, although he does not comment on the larger issue of the proper use of song.

This description of Antigone's fate recalls the second stasimon,[82] and it subtly reinforces the idea that song exists in a tradition that forms a continuity with the past. The image of Antigone's foot coming into violent contact with the throne of Dike (853–5)[83] recalls the association in the second stasimon of physical movement with human boldness and daring, with divine power as a limiting force. The last line links Antigone's fate to a family pattern, as did the second stasimon.

This song is again revised in Antigone's response, as she emends the chorus' formulaic reference to her family history with an intricate blending of the particular and the general. She infuses the story of the Labdacids with the particularity of her knowledge and feeling. Her first reaction is emotional, personal (ἔψαυσας ἀλγει-/νοτάτας ἐμοὶ μερίμνας, 'you have touched my most painful worry,' 857–8), and she goes on to juxtapose and blend her intimate and unique connection with the immediate members of her family and the general pattern of the family's history. We see this in the specificity and generality of lines 859–62 (πατρὸς τριπολίστου οἴτου/τοῦ τε πρόπαντος/ἁμετέρου πότμου/κλεινοῖς Λαβδακίδαισιν, 'my father's doom repeated thrice and all our fate, renowned Labdacids')[84] and in her use of the word ἆται (863), which evokes the patterns of the second stasimon but here describes the unique union of Jocasta and Oedipus and the specific detail of its confusion of the categories μήτηρ and πατήρ (865). Yet she also refers to Jocasta and Oedipus with the generalizing pronoun οἷοι (866), into which category she also places herself. She ends by ascribing her fate not to the general family history, as the chorus has, but to her brother's marriage and death: ἰὼ δυσπότμων κασί-/γνητε γάμων κυρήσας,/θανὼν ἔτ' οὖσαν κατήναρές με, 'oh brother, who made a disastrous marriage, in your death you have killed me while I am still living,' (869–71). The specific naming of cause here works in several ways. As a reference to Polyneices' marriage it gives prominence to a marginal aspect of the story but one essential to an account of cause and effect. But these lines might also be understood to refer to Oedipus, who is another of Antigone's brothers, and the cursing of his sons at

[82] Winnington-Ingram 1980, 141 calls the chorus' tone here Aeschylean, in keeping with the Aeschylean overtones of the second stasimon.

[83] Although various emendations have been suggested to the text, offering various levels of violence suggested by the verb, it is clear that the chorus is suggesting some violent contact between Antigone and Dike (See Pozzi 1989, who interprets the image as one of self-sacrifice).

[84] Griffith 1999, 272 prefers the reading τριπόλιστον οἶκτον.

his death.[85] The ambiguity of the reference, which evokes the unusual circumstances of Antigone's familial relationships, particularizes and enriches the chorus' generic reference to family history. Thus Antigone's song both confirms the chorus' paradigm and allows for the peculiarities of the particular situation.

The chorus' response illustrates schematically, almost comically, the nature of *its* song:

> σέβειν μὲν εὐσέβειά τις, ,
> κράτος δ' ὅτῳ κράτος μέλει,
> παραβατὸν οὐδαμᾷ πέλει,
> σὲ δ' αὐτόγνωτος ὤλεσ' ὀργά. (872–5)
>
> It is reverence to be reverent,
> while power, for whosoever has a concern for it,
> is never to be violated.
> Your self-determined will destroyed you.

The μὲν...δὲ.... construction separates and contrasts the first three lines—which, with their repetitions, rhymes, accentual pattern, and assonance, are almost sing-song parodies of choral form—from the last line which addresses Antigone in particular and ascribes her destruction to her willful defiance. The patterning of the first three lines represents the order which song celebrates; the final line divides Antigone from that order and puts her in her place.

The final words are Antigone's, and they emphasize her isolation.[86] The isolation she sings of is obviously in part her imminent entombment, but it is also the isolation of her voice: τὸν δ' ἐμὸν πότμον ἀδάκρυτον/ οὐδεὶς φίλων στενάζει, 'no friend laments my unwept fate,' (881–2). In her eyes she has failed to create a song that others—in particular the

[85] Sophokles includes the curse in his *Oedipus at Colonus*, and makes a connection back to the *Antigone* when Polyneices, upon being cursed by Oedipus, asks Antigone to bury him. The connection between Oedipus' curse and Antigone's death in the *Oedipus at Colonus* suggests the possibility of a reference to Oedipus' curse here and its connection with Antigone's own death. Antigone has referred to Oedipus as 'father' at lines 859 and 865. It is unlikely, therefore, that she explicitly includes Oedipus in the reference to 'brother' here. However, the connection she makes between marriage and death applies much more readily to Oedipus than Polyneices; it is therefore possible that the diction allows the audience to hear a reference to the complex knot of circumstances that includes Oedipus' marriage, Polyneices' marriage and Oedipus' curse.

[86] Winnington-Ingram 1980, 144 stresses her isolation. Ditmars 1992, 115 argues that the kommos has brought Antigone by its end to a full recognition of her own situation.

chorus—join in singing and can keep alive after her death. Her sense of isolation and her desire for a sympathetic ear challenge the audience to hold together and preserve the perspectives of both the chorus and Antigone. The extent of the disagreement and lack of understanding between them, however, makes it hard to imagine how the audience can make coherent sense of a song which marks the dissonance between the isolated individual voice and the unison of the chorus.

6) *Fractured Narrative and the Song of Fate*

στρ. α
ἔτλα καὶ Δανάας οὐράνιον φῶς
ἀλλάξαι δέμας ἐν χαλκοδέτοις αὐλαις·
κρυπτομένα δ᾽ ἐν τυμβή-
ρει θαλάμῳ κατεζεύχθη·
καίτοι ⟨καὶ⟩ γενεᾷ τίμιος, ὦ παῖ παῖ,
καὶ Ζηνὸς ταμιεύεσκε γονὰς χρυσορύτους.
ἀλλ᾽ ἁ μοιριδία τις δύνασις δεινά·
οὔτ᾽ ἄν νιν ὄλβος οὔτ᾽ Ἄρης,
οὐ πύργος, οὐχ ἁλίκτυποι
κελαιναὶ νᾶες ἐκφύγοιεν.

ἀντ. α
ζεύχθη δ᾽ ὀξύχολος παῖς ὁ Δρύαντος,
Ἠδωνῶν βασιλεύς, κερτομίοις ὀργαῖς
ἐκ Διονύσου πετρώ-
δει κατάφαρκτος ἐν δεσμῷ.
οὕτω τᾶς μανίας δεινὸν ἀποστάζει
ἀνθηρόν τε μένος· κεῖνος ἐπέγνω μανίαις
ψαύων τὸν θεὸν ἐν κερτομίοις γλώσσαις.
παύεσκε μὲν γὰρ ἐνθέους
γυναῖκας εὔιόν τε πῦρ,
φιλαύλους τ᾽ ἠρέθιζε μούσας.

στρ. β
παρὰ δὲ κυανέων †πελαγέων πετρῶν†
διδύμας ἁλὸς
ἀκταὶ Βοσπόριαι ⟨...⟩ ὁ Θρηίκων
Σαλμυδησσός, ἵν᾽ ἀγχίπτολις Ἄ-
ρης δισσοῖσι Φινείδαις
εἶδεν ἀρατὸν ἕλκος
τυφλωθὲν ἐξ ἀγρίας δάμαρτος
ἀλαὸν ἀλαστόροισιν ὀμμάτων κύκλοις
ἀραχθέντων ὑφ᾽ αἱματηραῖς
χείρεσσι καὶ κερκίδων ἀκμαῖσιν.

ἀντ. β
κατὰ δὲ τακόμενοι μέλεοι
μελέαν πάθαν
κλαῖον, ματρὸς ἔχοντες ἀνυμφεύτου γονάν·
ἁ δὲ σπέρμα μὲν ἀρχαιογόνων
⟨ἦν⟩ ἄνασσ᾽ Ἐρεχθειδᾶν,
τηλεπόροις δ᾽ ἐν ἄντροις
τράφη θυέλλησιν ἐν πατρῴαις
Βορεὰς ἅμιππος ὀρθόποδος ὑπὲρ πάγου
θεῶν παῖς· ἀλλὰ κἀπ᾽ ἐκείνᾳ
Μοῖραι μακραίωνες ἔσχον, ὦ παῖ.

After Antigone's final exit, the chorus performs an ode based on the myths of Danae, Lycurgus, and Cleopatra, implicitly correcting and replacing Antigone's evocation of the myth of Niobe. Elizabeth Ditmars has called the fourth stasimon a 'failed consolation' because here, for the first time, the chorus turns its lyric art to narrative, in the form of myth, instead of expressing an emotional reaction, for which lyric is particularly suited and which we, the audience, and Antigone need

at this moment.[87] The ode, much like the hymn to Eros, is certainly confusing, if we expect the chorus only to mark for us the emotional effect of the previous scene. But if we consider this bewildering stasimon as a way of thinking about human action, and a continuation of the struggle between the chorus and Antigone in the kommos to define the proper use of song, it aggressively and successfully exemplifies a lyric form of narrative that reflects concerns we have seen to be characteristic of choral performance. In telling these myths the song has no central thought or line of reasoning that connects the stories to each other or to the characters in the play.[88] Narrative coherence, whether internal or in connection with the plot, is deliberately frustrated in order to pose an alternative to the kind of narrative the actors attempt to construct with their actions. In addressing the song to Antigone (949: ὦ παῖ παῖ; 987: ὦ παῖ, the last words of the song) the chorus tries to correct, not console, her. The fact that Antigone is clearly moving away and by the end, in all probability, cannot hear the song vividly captures the inability of one mode to address the other.[89]

As many have noted, the telling of the myths in this song becomes more and more fragmented until, in the last case, it is almost impossible to say what story the chorus means to tell. At the same time it is clear that no single interpretation of the relevance of this song to the surrounding drama will satisfy us. Rather we must understand that the lack of narrative coherence and the multiple, indefinite and indirect

[87] "Narrative in song finds us doubly vulnerable, all the more in that it is not what we have come to expect from this musically virtuosic chorus. We are separated from one narrative—the play's action, and just when we were most drawn into it—by another. When what we needed was music, what we are given is the infinite sadness of the 'world of textuality.'" (Ditmars 1992, 148)

[88] Critics have tried to make specific connectons between the mythological paradigms and both Antigone and Creon. For example, Schwinge 1971, 318–9 argues that the female paradigms, who suffer without cause, are meant by the chorus to comfort Antigone, while the paradigm of Lycurgus masks the chorus' intent by obscuring the parallel to her. This argument cleverly explains the clear incongruity of all three paradigms to any one character.

[89] Kamerbeek 1978, 24 has argued that the chorus' awareness of Creon as an audience for this ode affects its form: "The Chorus is speaking in veiled terms in the presence of the ruler; the elders are supposed as yet not to have made up their mind but to tend to a condemnation of Creon." To psychologize the chorus in this way seems to achieve only a partial explanation of the effect here; Bowra 1944, 104–5 does a similar thing when he suggests that the ode reflects a new uncertainty and doubt in the chorus about the correctness of their position vis à vis Antigone and Creon.

relationships to the specifics of the drama are, in fact, the point.[90] The song is the natural culmination of the point of view the chorus expresses both in the kommos and throughout the play, in that it narrates stories whose paradigmatic force does not center on the particular circumstances of the human agents in time or space. Its fragmented telling of myth and its explicit 'lesson' of the power of fate together demonstrate the futility of attempting a sequence of coherent actions. The song occurs at the climax of the play's action, which, by contrast, dramatizes the bonds of cause and effect and the importance of actions which create moral, ethical and political coherence.

The fourth stasimon is a virtuoso performance that illustrates the inconsequentiality of the particulars of time, agency, motive, and responsibility in the stories of Danae, Lycurgus and Cleopatra, and establishes instead the power of *moira* as the only cohesive element in this narrative incoherence.[91] The disintegration of the narrative emerges in the course of the song in obvious ways. The naming of the central characters in each story becomes less pointed: from Δανάας (944) to παῖς ὁ Δρύαντος, Ἠδωνῶν βασιλεύς (955–6) to δισσοῖσι Φινείδαις (971) to ματρὸς...γονάν (980), σπέρμα...Ἐρεχθειδᾶν (981–2), and θεῶν παῖς (985–6). At the same time the logic of the narrative shifts

[90] The multiplicity and tenuousness of the connections which scholars have found to the characters in the play are, in this reading, the inevitable result of the way the myths are told. (See, for two examples of thoughtful interpretation, Winnington-Ingram 1980, 98–109, and Sourvinou-Inwood 1989, 141–165.) Any one of the connections critics have seen, and others we cannot imagine, may well have entered the imagination of any given audience member. But no single way of talking about the connections can give a final meaning to the ode; rather it seems that the 'meaning' of the ode is anchored in the explicitly interpretative statement about fate which the chorus applies to its own paradigms and invites the audience to apply to the various connections which the stories in their openendedness inspire. Ditmars 1992, 139–47 sees the many connections between the stories and the characters as a kind of irony and concludes: "Many contradictory interpretations may seem valid when looked at singly, a condition which can prevail only so long as one clear meaning does not emerge. And I believe it does not." (139–40). In her reading the ode is therefore in no sense didactic but rather marks the loss of Antigone as a presence on stage by absorbing her into a story. The chorus' narrative, however, by its very nature cannot, in my reading, 'contain' Antigone's story, at least as she wishes it to be told.

[91] Winnington-Ingram 1980, 99–100 says "One need not deny that the idea of fate is a unifying theme...But of course this theme, important though it may be, can in itself provide no explanation of the poet's choice of cases by which to illustrate it." He then carefully and thoughtfully traces the connections he sees between the "cases" and the characters in the play without making the fragmentary nature of the stories a part of his interpretation. The question to ask seems to be not 'why these cases?' but 'why illustrate the workings of fate in this manner?'

from a sequential series of moments (Danae's imprisonment, her rape, her pregnancy, and the conclusion to be drawn in the first strophe), to a reversal of sequence (Lycurgus' punishment and cure, before the narration of his crime), to a completely disconnected account of the blinding of the sons and the upbringing of the mother in the Cleopatra myth. This shift unravels the idea of logical consequence, of one act or event leading to another.

While the internal narrative coherence of the song is fragmented, the external connections between its mythological characters and the actors in the drama also become more and more tenuous. Danae as a paradigm for Antigone makes some sense, since they are both imprisoned by male relatives who are threatened by their capacity to carry out the particularly female acts of child-bearing and burial. Lycurgus learns the consequences of the kind of madness which defies divine rule; one could see in his story a possible, though remote, connection to Creon's situation, at least by the end of the play. The connection becomes stronger if we recall Lycurgus' (unnarrated) murder of his son, but only if we think of the song later, when we hear of Haimon's death. But the blinding of the sons of Phineas and their mother's girlhood as a daughter of the wind can only have very indirect and deeply obscure connections (made obscurer by the form of the narrative) to the story of the Labdacids.[92]

We are also made aware, in this last story, of its geographical marginality, at the edges of the Greek world. While the Lycurgus story takes place in Thrace, no emphasis is given to its location, beyond calling Lycurgus Ἠδωνῶν βασιλεύς (956). In the final paradigm the setting in Thrace is vividly described at the opening of the stanza, so that the obliqueness of the paradigm becomes explicitly marked through geographical description. In comparison with the marginality of the stories themselves the centrality and universality of the claim which frames, and thus contains, the ode become evident: no one can escape the consequences of *moira*, no matter what his/her story. This claim does not depend on the coherence of the narrative to validate

[92] Sourvinou-Inwood 1989 has made some subtle and provocative connections between Cleopatra and Antigone and argues that in general the ode illustrates man's blindness and lack of control in the face of divine will. Though I agree with her conclusion in general outline, I think it is a mistake to base that conclusion on a particular reading of the mythological paradigms without taking account of the extremely elliptical form of the narrative. That form has to affect how we understand the articulation of the power of divine will and apply it to the action of the play.

it, as does, for example, Antigone's defense of her action or Creon's explanation of his decree. In fact the disintegration of narrative coherence, the remoteness of the action being narrated, and the lack of clear connections to the plot illustrate the irrelevance of what humans consider important in determining or describing an action to a song celebrating the power of *moira*.

Despite the radical differences in the circumstances and narration of the three stories, the conclusion the chorus draws at the beginning and end of the telling is the same: ἀλλ' ἁ μοιριδία τις δύνασις δεινά, 'awesome is fate's power' (951) and ἀλλὰ κἀπ' ἐκείνᾳ/ Μοῖραι μακραίωνες ἔσχον, 'but even at her the long-lived Fates took aim,' (986–7).[93] For the chorus the overwhelming sameness of our subjection to the power of fate and of divinity obliterates all the particulars of our stories and all the differences in our circumstances and how we act. As we catch the fleeting references to life stories in the song and make impressionistic connections to the stories we are witnessing, what we realize is that it doesn't matter how or whether they match. We are being given a brilliant lyric display of song's power to obliterate history in recognition of the forces that actually give shape to our lives.

The song fails as consolation only if we, like Antigone, want to be consoled for the particular circumstances of her story; if we accept the patterns which the chorus has been demonstrating throughout the play, we can indeed find comfort in the power of this song to evoke the power of fate. Far from becoming more like an actor than a "shaper of larger meanings from outside" as the drama progresses,[94] the chorus becomes freer and freer to be a chorus, to sing songs whose 'relevance' to the drama can be felt only if we accept the immutable patterns it represents in song and dance. At the same time the audience's ability to hold together the two distinct points of view is strained, as we are confronted by the particularity of the suffering of Antigone, Eurydice, Haimon, and finally Creon and the sense of that suffering as the logical consequence of the choices and decisions of the independent actors.

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[93] Coleman 1972, 22 argues that the chorus' inclusion of such different myths under the sway of fate's universal power denies to human suffering any "ultimate moral meaning;" he reads the chorus' tone in the face of this understanding as "bewildered pessimism." I would argue that the ode is rather a demonstration of a structure—though not a moral one—which for the chorus makes perfect sense, as does the song contained by the pattern of the dance.

[94] Ditmars 1992, 135–6.

7) *Dionysos After All*

στρ. α
πολυώνυμε, Καδμείας
νύμφας ἄγαλμα
καὶ Διὸς βαρυβρεμέτα
γένος, κλυτὰν ὃς ἀμφέπεις
Ἰταλίαν, μέδεις δὲ
παγκοίνοις Ἐλευσινίας
Δηοῦς ἐν κόλποις, ὦ Βακχεῦ,
βακχᾶν ματρόπολιν Θήβαν
ναιετῶν παρ' ὑγρὸν
Ἰσμηνοῦ ῥεέθρων, ἀγρίου τ'
ἐπὶ σπορᾷ δράκοντος.

ἀντ. α
σὲ δ' ὑπὲρ διλόφου πέτρας
στέροψ ὄπωπε
λιγνύς, ἔνθα Κωρύκιαι
στείχουσι Νύμφαι βακχίδες
Κασταλίας τε νᾶμα.
καί σε Νυσαίων ὀρέων
κισσήρεις ὄχθαι χλωρά τ' ἀ-
κτὰ πολυστάφυλος πέμπει
ἀμβρότων ἐπέων
εὐαζόντων Θηβαίας
ἐπισκοποῦντ' ἀγυιάς.

στρ. β
τὰν ἐκ πασᾶν τιμᾷς
ὑπερτάταν πόλεων
ματρὶ σὺν κεραυνίᾳ·
νῦν δ', ὡς βιαίας ἔχεται
πάνδαμος πόλις ἐπὶ νόσου,
μολεῖν καθαρσίῳ ποδὶ Παρνασίαν
ὑπὲρ κλειτὺν ἢ στονόεντα πορθμόν.

ἀντ. β
ἰὼ πῦρ πνεόντων
χοράγ' ἄστρων, νυχίων
φθεγμάτων ἐπίσκοπε,
Ζηνὸς γένεθλον, προφάνηθ',
ὦναξ, σαῖς ἅμα περιπόλοις
Θυίασιν, αἵ σε μαινόμεναι πάννυχοι
χορεύουσι τὸν ταμίαν Ἴακχον.

As the play reaches its end, Sophokles teases us briefly with an apparent lessening of the gap between the chorus and actors. By the end of the scene in which Teiresias warns of imminent destruction from the gods, Creon's ability to decide what to do fails, and he turns to the chorus for advice. It proposes an explicit action and Creon agrees; the distance between the two worlds seems to have collapsed with this participation of the chorus in the action of the play.[95] But, in fact, the closeness allows the differences to emerge clearly, as we shall see if we look carefully at the chorus' language when it gives Creon advice.[96] The end of the

[95] Waldock 1951, 119–21 comments on this unusual moment in the play as the exception that proves the rule that the chorus' contribution is "tangential" to the real drama.. While I agree with him that it is completely misguided to see the chorus as 'real participants,' it is a failure of the imagination to assume that that means they have no important role to play in the drama.

[96] Alexanderson 1966, 103–4 believes that the chorus' role from this point on in the play changes radically from being a character that supports Creon's point of view and opposes Antigone to a mouthpiece for Sophokles, who must at this point reveal Creon's actions as wrong and has only the chorus at his disposal to provide a critical voice. Sophokles, he argues, is not concerned about maintaining the chorus' character consistently. His argument seems to me to reveal some of the difficulty that critics

play, however, does finally bring some kind of unity to the actors' and the chorus' perspectives by bringing the action to a close coherently. The chorus summons the god in its last stasimon, but not in the form in which he is finally 'present' in the theater. It is as the god of theater that his presence is most apparent, in the particular power of the tragic experience that the audience is left with at the end of the play.

After the chorus has offered its suggestion that Creon release Antigone and bury Polyneices (1100–1), it urges Creon to act quickly, in the face of the swiftly approaching intervention of the gods:

> ὅσον γ', ἄναξ, τάχιστα· συντέμνουσι γὰρ
> θεῶν ποδώκεις τοὺς κακόφρονας βλάβαι. (1103–4)
>
> As quickly as possible, king, for swift-footed Harm from
> the gods cuts those with foolish minds off.

Though Creon follows the chorus' advice, he makes no response to its reason for urgency; his motivation remains resolutely bound to the logic by which he has acted throughout: ἐγὼ δ', ἐπειδὴ δόξα τῇδ' ἐπιστράφη,/ αὐτός τ' ἔδησα καὶ παρὼν ἐκλύσομαι, 'Since my opinion has gone in this direction, I myself both bound her and will be there to release her,' (1111–2). He is clear about the self-determination of his change of mind (I understand δόξα refer to his own thought) and about his actions' fundamental consistency. The fear he expresses in the next lines is not a response to the chorus' threat about the approaching βλάβαι but an awareness that his action may have threatened the καθεστῶτας νόμους, 'established laws' (1113). While these might include divine law, Creon's concern is based on the assumption that all laws depend on the action of men to preserve them. Thus even when the chorus seems to determine the action of the play, Creon, in responding to its suggestion, reformulates the reason for acting to maintain his sense of choice and self-determination.

In fact the very manner in which the chorus prescribes the desired action shows its ignorance of action's most fundamental aspect: its existence in time and space. Many commentators have argued that in proposing to Creon that he release Antigone and bury Polyneices,

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confront when they try to read the odes as fashioned by the character of the chorus: either one has to abandon consistency of character or one has to force the language of the odes to express a point of view consistent with what the character 'ought' to be saying.

the chorus determines a proper order for these actions, which Creon then reverses.[97] However, although it speaks of the release of Antigone before the burial of Polyneices, the chorus organizes the two acts not in temporal sequence but in a μὲν...δὲ...construction that balances and/or opposes them: ἐλθὼν κόρην μὲν ἐκ κατώρυχος στέγης/ἄνες, κτίσον δὲ τῷ προκειμένῳ τάφον, 'Go and on the one hand release the girl from her rocky house and on the other build a tomb for the one who lies exposed' (1100–1). In addition to describing the two acts in a non-temporal structure, the chorus arranges them in a neat verbal pattern: accusative-prepositional phrase-imperative; imperative-dative-accusative. It does not feel an actor's concern for temporal sequence or motivational logic but rather shapes action into stable, balanced, and abstract patterns.

It might be tempting to think that the chorus enters the action here and that Sophokles allows the audience to feel congruity between the chorus' point of view and the actors', so that the final act of the play dramatizes human participation in the divine ordering of the universe. To do so, however, would be to ignore the ways in which Sophokles keeps the tension between human and divine order before us. What the chorus describes in its μὲν...δὲ...construction, Creon must order temporally, in his choice of action. He has to do one thing before the other. We wait to see what he will do, tantalized by the thought that, if his choice gives an order to events which mirrors the patterning of the chorus' words, the seeming tension between the two points of view will indeed be resolved. However, as we soon find out, Creon buries Polyneices first and, while he does so, Antigone kills herself, precipitating the death of Haimon and Eurydice.[98] Here, from the actors' point of view, is chaos, not order.

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[97] See, for example, Kamerbeek 1978, 31–2, who argues that the reversal of the natural and expected order is due in part to dramatic necessity, in part to a desire to heighten suspense. He dismisses the idea that we are supposed to feel that "had Creon stuck to the order of the Coryphaeus' lines, Antigone (and Haemon) might have been saved" but does not say why.

[98] Critics have seen Creon's motivation for burying Polyneices first in various ways. For example, Coleman 1972, 23–24 argues that Sophokles is reinforcing the message of the fourth stasimon by demonstrating the ineluctability of the consequences of Creon's fateful initial decision not to bury Polyneices. It seems impossible to speculate about Creon's reasoning here. The absence of any evidence in the language of the play leaves us with the simple fact that Creon had to do one thing before another, that the choice had to be made. We then must acknowledge that, whether the reasons for acting in a certain way are good or not, the action one chooses to take has an effect

In the last stasimon, while Creon acts, the chorus attempts its own cure of Thebes by summoning the 'purifying foot' of Dionysos. Once again the audience may seem to be invited to believe that the chorus' action and Creon's action will coincide. As in the hymn to Eros and the lyric myth-telling of the fourth stasimon, the chorus' final stasimon uses a form, the kletic hymn, that typifies its way of participating in the play: the hymn and dance to Dionysos summon the god and create the possibility for the cure which human action may not achieve.[99] The god they summon belongs to Thebes in a special way (1137–39); he is the civic god whom the rituals of Theban choral dance traditionally honour and whose protection Thebans evoke in immortal song.[100] The possibility exists that the ritual action of the chorus in summoning the civic god and the action of the city's king will coincide to establish a harmony between divine and human order.[101]

The 'cure' that ends the play, however, is neither the ecstatic dance of the god the chorus summons nor the acts of the king, but the 'katharsis' of tragedy, which the god who reigns in the theater governs. While the chorus acknowledges Dionysos' many forms (πολυώνυμε, 1115), it takes for granted that his appearance will be benign, that the order he brings will mitigate the consequences of human weakness and be cause for celebration.[102] Whatever dark overtones some of the

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on what happens next. That Sophokles gives us the fact of Creon's choice without explaining it seems to emphasize the necessity and importance of choice rather than the inevitability of fate.

[99] Scullion 1998 has tackled the question of exactly what kind of cure 'the purifying foot' of Dionysos offers. He concludes that the chorus imagines a curing of the city's mental anguish and civic strife through Dionysiac revelry and ecstatic dance. He views this power of the god as the primary focus of the song, while other critics emphasize the associations of Dionysos with Eleusis and the promise of rebirth (esp. Henrichs 1990, 264–269).

[100] We assume a Theban cult to Dionysos from the evidence of the *Bacchae*. See, for example, Seaford 1994, 255.

[101] Songs like this that offer false hope right before disaster ('hyporchemes') have a special place in Sophoklean drama. The irony of the juxtaposition of hope and disaster may be directed at choral ignorance, but it may also move the audience to recognize the way in which the ensuing disaster is, from one perspective, actually the fulfillment of the hope the song expresses.

[102] Winnington-Ingram 1980, 110–16, in exploring the nature of Dionysos in the play, suggests that there is a consistent association with madness in the references to the god in the parodos and fourth and fifth stasima. In his view this ode foreshadows the destruction of the end of the play by pointing to Dionysos' connection with mania. While this may be so, it is certainly not a conscious aspect of the chorus' evocation; it is impossible to believe that the chorus consciously asks for the kind of destruction which Dionysos' presence, on Winnington-Ingram's reading, brings. Ditmars 1992, 158

descriptions of Dionysos here may carry,[103] the chorus clearly calls on this god not only because he belongs to Thebes in a special way but because it believes that his cure will provide what human agents cannot: an order which will preserve the city. The irony created by their optimism at this moment goes to the core of the divine nature of the god who is present, the god of the theater whose only cure is to expose human ignorance and challenge us not to evade the ambiguities and unresolved tensions of our existence.[104]

The chorus, in evoking Dionysos, pictures his mastery in spectacular imagery which ironically ignores his rule over the spectacle of the the-

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extends Winnington-Ingram's view of Dionysos to include the contradictory aspects of his nature: "All the powers of nature, destructive and regenerative, chthonic and celestial, are summoned, in the person of Dionysus, to heal the city..this ode is a vision…of wholeness, and of the god as agent of transcendence." Oudemans and Lardinois 1987, 159 see the ambiguity in the chorus' description of Dionysos as ironic, since the chorus does not realize that its own description implies an end it is not anticipating. They furthermore claim that the false hope expressed in this hymn is the natural condition of all humans, a hope on which man "lives, and through which he is destroyed at the same time." Albert Henrichs 1990, 257–77, has noted the many Eleusinian references in the ode and interprets their presence as an indication that the chorus summons Dionysos to console us for the death of Antigone. The references to the Eleusinian mysteries and their promise of an afterlife certainly celebrate and invoke Dionysos as, among other things, one who can counter the finality and loss of death, but that they do so in reference to Antigone is nowhere suggested in the ode. Moreover, Antigone is not yet dead; nor will she be, if Creon accomplishes what he has set out to do. The chorus' references to Dionysos' ability to negate death demonstrate the positive nature of his power for humans, while marking the absolute distinction between his omnipotence and human limitation: only the god and his mysteries can address and perhaps mitigate the absolute limit to human power which death represents.

103 Winnington-Ingram 1980, 111–116 suggests the ways in which the language of the ode reminds us of Dionysos' negative powers over humans. He does not make clear whether he thinks the chorus or Sophokles is reminding the audience of the danger of his presence; he may be right that Sophokles intends the audience to feel the danger, but it cannot be argued that the chorus does, since it has no doubt that the god will bring a cure which it can celebrate.

104 Goheen 1951, 43 writes: "In the play the actual 'cure' takes place through the more terrible and real process of tragic retribution and tragic waste rather than at the hands of a *deus ex machina*." I would argue that the tragic experience is to be felt as a manifestation of Dionysos who is the *deus ex machina* of every tragedy. This is not an experience of retribution and waste for the audience but rather of the compelling need, inspired by the suffering the audience has witnessed, to make sense of all the voices in the play as a whole, however contradictory they may be. Oudemans' and Lardinois' description of the tragic division the play enacts is as follows: "The city can only continue its existence by sacrificing those who are its most respected representatives, and there is no end to this persistent self-sacrifice." (1987, 159) It seems to me unlikely that the end of the play teaches the audience the necessity of the civic leaders' self-sacrifice rather than each citizen's responsibility to attempt to honor in his own action the contradictory claims the play makes about man's place in the universe.

ater. The first stanza, in conventional fashion, celebrates his lordship over various regions: Italy, Eleusis and Thebes. In the rest of the song the images of Dionysos keeping mindful watch over potentially uncontrolled aspects of the divine and natural worlds leave out the human world altogether: the Κωρύκιαι νύμφαι Βακχίδες (1128–9) with their smouldering torches; the banks and shores overgrown with ivy and grapes, from which Thebes receives the god as a visitor, ἐπισκοποῦντ' (1132–6); the stars breathing fire, whose song and dance he leads, χοραγός (1146–7); the night cries, over which he is master, ἐπίσκοπος (1148); finally the μαινόμεναι Θυῖαι, maddened attendants, Thyiads, (1151), for whom he is steward, ταμάς. The nouns which describe his role—χοραγός, ἐπίσκοπος, ταμίας—put him in control of sights and sounds whose exuberance and potentially destructive force amplify and celebrate his mastery. Such a god, the chorus believes, can bring order to the chaos that threatens Thebes, arising as it does out of mere human limitations. And the chorus also believes that its own song, which imitates the chorus of the stars in worshipping him, has the power to rise above the chaos to summon the god and to avert disaster from the city. What it fails to see is that its song, without the rest of the play, cannot embody the god who is, indeed, present in the theater and offers the city, in the shape of the audience, the tragic experience of human limitation as a cure.

If we have imagined that the chorus' cure and Creon's cure may coincide to resolve the tension between the different perspectives of chorus and actors, we come to understand finally that its resolution only happens in the context of a truth more complicated and difficult than either chorus or actor has asked us to imagine. The Dionysos who joins with Creon to end the play is the god of tragedy. He comes καθαρσίῳ ποδί (1144) to manifest his 'saving' powers not in the promise of an afterlife, as he does as Iacchus, nor as the god who orders the dance of the stars, the Nymphs, the Maenads, nor in the purifying dance of the possessed, but as the orchestrator of human suffering, as it manifests itself in tragic drama. That suffering comes not from any supernatural power but directly out of the actions human take, and it is a suffering which resolves nothing, as Creon's lonely voice and the dead bodies which surround him at the end of the play make evident. Actions are formed by the essential circumstances of human existence, of human history: passage of time, notions of cause and effect, a desire to define and determine our world, and the limit and the urgency of our mortality. But they are also informed, supplemented, and challenged

by the reality which choral song and dance express and celebrate, the capacity to be cognizant of and respond to the divine world. The play, along with its god, makes a unity of all this only by coming to an end. This is not the resolved, ordered, and integrated end that the chorus and Creon together make us hope for, but an end which forces us to deal with multiple, contradictory points of view whose only common thread is the suffering of the individuals involved and the limits of our fragmented vision.

If we look at the actions which constitute the exodos, mostly narrated by the messenger, we are astounded by the variety and power of human expression they display. Creon still acts out of limited understanding of one of the fundamental aspects of human existence. He comes upon Polyneices' body first and stops to bury him, following the logic of the linear movement of space and time and so gives the dead precedence over the living. As he buries Polyneices, Antigone kills herself. This act expresses her need to give unambiguous meaning to the words that define her, as she has done throughout the play. So here she acts to make clear what it is to be alive, to be dead. Her action gives stability to language, so that it can be a trustworthy guide to understanding how to act, but only through the silencing of her voice. Haimon, confronting his father at the site of Antigone's death, lunges at him, misses, and kills himself in one continuous movement. Passionate feeling, which in the scene between Haimon and Creon was so carefully and fruitlessly harnessed to persuasion, here finds it fullest expression in an act which makes father and son equally victims of their failure to find the proper act to contain their feeling. Eurydice, on hearing this story narrated, silently departs to kill herself in an expression of cause and effect no less articulate for the silence which surrounds her. Finally Creon finds expression for his grief in song which, unlike Antigone's kommos, tries only in the moment to give form to his feeling. To his song the chorus responds in speech, acknowledging, perhaps, a use of song that must coexist with their own.

All the invention, determination, and painful impotence of human understanding and expression are dramatized at the end of the play; but it is Dionysos alone who, as god of the theatre, brings into play and controls that action. We see his order in the formal elements, the theatrical conventions, of the exodos: the chorus' hymn, the messenger speech, and the actor's lament. His resolution of the tension between the chorus and actors, between their different views of what it is to be

human, is to demand that members of the audience somehow listen to, hold in their minds, and act out of the multiple voices of the play. As the chorus says to Creon (of Eurydice's corpse): ὁρᾶν πάρεστιν· οὐ γὰρ ἐν μυχοῖς ἔτι, 'It is here to see, no longer hidden away in the depths' (1293). What we do with the vision the god of the theatre gives us is up to us.

CHAPTER TWO

PHILOKTETES

The chorus plays an extensive, distinctive, and powerful role in the *Antigone*;[1] it may seem ill-advised, therefore, to base an overall interpretation of Sophokles' use of the chorus on a discussion of this one play. Looking closely at another play, particularly one with a very different kind of chorus, will allow us to see if the approach to the chorus I have explored in the *Antigone* has a more general validity for understanding the Sophoklean chorus. I have chosen to look at the chorus of the *Philoktetes* for this purpose for a number of reasons: it has posed many problems of interpretation for critics; it is markedly different from the chorus of the *Antigone*; and it has consistently been understood as functioning like a character in the play. It, therefore, seems to challenge a view that claims for the chorus a unique mode of expression and a point of view that is distinctively and intimately connected with it.

Interpreters frequently remark on the unusual blending of actors and chorus in the *Philoktetes*.[2] Some have argued that the chorus stands in for Odysseus and keeps before the audience's mind the set of arguments and plans that Odysseus presents to Neoptolemos before he disappears after the prologue.[3] Gardiner describes the chorus as a character occupying a middle ground between Odysseus and Neoptolemos and argues that it is there to bring out important characteristics of the principal actors. In particular, it provides a necessary audience for Odysseus' demagoguery and in this way stands in for the Greek army at Troy.[4] Winnington-Ingram suggests that the chorus provides a backdrop of experience and down-to-earth practicality against which

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[1] As Stephen Esposito (1996), 89 says of the *Antigone* in his survey of the chorus in Sophoklean tragedy, it is "his most regularly patterned tragedy in terms of formal structure and his most lyrical in terms of the proportion of choral song (twenty-two stanzas) to narrative."

[2] Gardiner 1987, 13 states "The chorus of *Philoctetes* are particularly unusual because they apparently have been assigned the role of a deceitful character;" this opinion represents a common assumption in the treatment of the chorus in the *Philoktetes*.

[3] See, for example, Esposito (1996), 100.

[4] Gardiner 1987, 48–9.

the fluctuations of Neoptolemos' growing moral sense take shape in the audience's mind.[5] All of these readings assume that the chorus is best understood as a minor character who provides a necessary foil for the principal actors. This assumption is supported by the startling fact that the chorus sings only one independent ode; all its other songs take the form of lyric dialogue with the actors or, in one case, an unusual song in the middle of an episode whose two responding stanzas are separated from each other by a hundred lines of dialogue. So the chorus does not seem to be separated even formally from the actors.

Some commentators view the chorus' diminishing independence and prominence in this play as a loss of interest on Sophokles' part in the unique role the chorus can play in the shape and rhythm of a play. Indeed Esposito sees the *Philoktetes*, along with the two other late plays of Sophokles we have, as a turning point in the evolution of tragedy as a genre. He posits a "struggle between chorus and actor for prominence" and traces a downward spiral for the chorus' role, triggered by Sophokles' introduction of a third actor and culminating in Euripides' elimination of any dramatic significance for the chorus.[6]

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[5] Winnington-Ingram 1980, 284–5;287; Schmidt 1977 also views the chorus as a kind of foil for Neoptolemos, in that they are clearly his subordinates whose duty is to support him; but as 'simple people' ('einfache Manne,' 155) they reflect a limited understanding of the situation which contrasts with the deepening sensibility of their leader.

[6] In this view Sophokles' participation in the lessening of the chorus' importance starts with his changing the ratio of independent odes to lyric dialogues with the actors, so that lyric dialogues in the late plays dominate. Esposito 1996, 108, summarizes his understanding of the evolution of the role of the chorus by saying: "As the chorus moved into the arena of the actors, on occasion even seeming to become an actor, the distinction between tragedy's two constituent elements (iambic and lyric, speech and song) began to become blurred, to the detriment of the chorus and probably to the detriment of the genre itself. The uniqueness of the chorus's contribution was fading away and before long, as we know from fourth-century drama (and *Poetics* 1456a 27–32 on Agathon's *embolima* or 'inserted lyrics') their voice would be heard no longer." There can be no arguing with the general statement that over time the chorus' role in Greek tragedy changed and diminished. It seems risky, however, to fit the work of Aeschylus, Sophokles and Euripides into this evolutionary model in any kind of schematic way. In the first place it reduces the complexity and variety of the playwrights' uses of the chorus to a single issue of the relative importance of actors and chorus. It also puts the three playwrights in relation to each other in a continuum of "development" which doesn't take account of their differences of focus and interest. And it seems to simplify in a drastic way the reasons for the chorus' diminishing role. If the choral role is threatened in the *Philoktetes* it is not, I think, because of some larger evolutionary pattern of development in the genre of Greek tragedy but because Sophokles wishes to construct a world in this play in which the voice of the chorus is compromised as part of the pessimistic view of human resources that the play dramatizes. For an example

That choral odes do not play a prominent role in the *Philoktetes* cannot be denied. Nor is there any doubt but that this chorus is involved in the plot to return Philoktetes to Troy. But this closeness and the relative insignificance of its song do not necessarily mean that the chorus participates in the action *as an actor*, or that the chorus does not have a distinct dramatic presence. Rather we might conclude that the failure of the chorus to establish its own perspective is part of the dramatic action. As we shall see when we look more closely at the chorus' songs, the limitation and restriction of the chorus' voice is a feature of the wider dramatic world of the *Philoktetes*, a world in which human attempts to find a cure for their need and suffering are severely limited, futile, or self-defeating. By limiting choral song and by implicating it in the utilitarian, goal-oriented, amoral attitudes of Odysseus[7] and, to some extent, Neoptolemos, Sophokles diminishes the resources by which the audience might be able to understand the desired and fated cure of Philoktetes' return to Troy.

Charles Segal has claimed that "[t]hrough his divinities Sophocles does not establish a clear theodicy but rather explores the possibility that our lives may have a purpose and a meaning beyond the narrow motives of profit, success, position, or even personal happiness that men and women define as their goals."[8] Choral song in Sophokles frequently brings before us that possibility and, further, testifies to the importance for humans to act in a way that acknowledges it, as we have seen in the *Antigone*. In the *Philoktetes*, however, the chorus does not bring this perspective to bear on the action with any consistency and, in the moments when it does, it is in a form that is compromised by the surrounding action. To the degree that the chorus attempts to take part in the action by using its song to serve it, it puts at risk the integrity and power of its vision; its participation, along with the actors,

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of a more positive interpretation of the development of Sophokles' choral style in the later plays, see Taplin 1984–5, 115–122.

[7] Blundell 1989,189–93 does a careful analysis of the ethical stance that Odysseus represents. She summarizes it by saying that "[h]e sets up an alternative criterion of behaviour, irrespective of morality. This criterion is explicitly identified as 'salvation' (109) or *kerdos* (111). The former is in itself irreproachable, but the latter is an unsavoury term suggesting prosperity gained at the expense of others, often by treacherous means. (187)" It is this "criterion of behaviour" which casts a spell over Neoptolemos and which the chorus allows its song to serve, thus undermining its own perspective. While Neoptolemos works free of that spell, only to fall into the trap of Philoktetes' heroic inflexibility, the chorus stays under its spell.

[8] Segal 1995, 97.

in the creation of a deceptive illusion limits the capacity of its unique language to serve as a resource for understanding or bringing about what is needed to bring Philoktetes to Troy and to save the Greeks. And when the chorus does sing independently of the action, it reveals the limitation of song's capacity, in the world of this play, to inform it or to deepen the audience's ability to understand it through a different perspective.[9] When, for example, we hear the chorus falsify its own performance of a prayer (391–403) to support Neoptolemos' lie to Philoktetes, it compromises the power of song to evoke and appeal to the divine order and make it a part of our understanding of the world. The chorus does not stop dancing and singing and start acting. The audience must watch with consternation, however, as its song and dance repeatedly fail to find a coherent form or remain internally consistent and integrated.[10] The nature of its song contributes to the failure of

[9] Seth Schein 1988, 204, argues that the chorus' role as one of the actors "contributes to the play's distinctive atmosphere of opportunism and its problematic lack of any consolatory, enlightening, or uplifting perspective on its own events and values." I agree with his sense of the loss of the chorus' perspective but not with his understanding that this happens because the chorus becomes one of the actors. Rather it is the ineffectiveness of the chorus *as chorus* which we feel as a loss.

[10] Since the language of the choruses is, for the most part, far less imagistic in this play than in the *Antigone* (as Burton 1980, 249 says, "apart from a few passages in the review of the hero's life in the parodos and the stasimon, and the marvellous exploitation of verbal music in the sleep scene, there is not much to stir the imagination."), I imagine that the dance movement would also be less explicitly mimetic of pictures created by the poetry. It is tempting to imagine that the chorus' dance represents visually the same kind of limitation to freedom of expression as its song. Since the difficult position which all the characters are in is represented visually in part by the nature of their movements, I would expect the same to be true of the chorus. Although Philoktetes is by far the most obvious case of physical impairment, Odysseus and Neoptolemos also have physical limitations which, I think, are representative of their limited intellectual and ethical stances: Odysseus is initially not able to walk openly onto the stage and when he is finally forced to do so, the result is first an ineffective attempt to coerce Philoktetes physically to accompany him and then an equally ineffective, almost comic attempt to stop Neoptolemos from returning the bow to Philoktetes; Neoptolemos' movement on stage is a pattern of repeated failures to take Philoktetes off stage whether on his own terms or on Philoktetes'. (See Seale 1982, 26–50 and particularly 34–35, for an interesting discussion of the significance of movement in the play; also Taplin 1971, 25–44). The chorus' dance would fit into the metaphorical use Sophokles makes of movement in the play if it reinforced the nature of its song by miming the actors' movements, making deceptive gestures of prayer and supplication, as well as expressing the confident expectation of meaningful order and the belief in the power of the performative moment to affect reality.

language as a resource for understanding, instruction, and persuasive communication, which lies at the center of the play's hopelessness.[11]

The limitation of the chorus' language is most apparent in the form of its songs. As we shall see, all but one are internally divided, split, or incoherent in an unusual way, and the only whole, integrated stasimon—the only moment when the chorus performs fully and independently—seems flatly to contradict the point of view it offers in its other songs.[12] Internal contradiction and fragmentation mark the chorus as an unreliable interpreter for the audience and raise questions about the source of the chorus' failure to achieve full expression of its own perspective. It is not the chorus as actor that is subject to the audience's scrutiny in this way but the chorus as singer and dancer whose very particular mode of expression is not immune from the general inability of language to express an effective and reliable moral, ethical, or religious understanding.

Although we experience the failure of the chorus to achieve a consistent dramatic presence, its song communicates, in its fragmented way, a unique point of view that is a function of its choral identity and thus distinguishes it from the characters. Scholars have noted that, despite the chorus' support of Odysseus' lie, it consistently expresses pity for Philoktetes and that that pity sets it apart.[13] If one sees the chorus as

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[11] As Podlecki 1966, 233 puts it, "the *Philoktetes* is a case-study in the failure of communication, involving three individuals who fail to come to terms with one another because they are, in effect, speaking with different voices. Their tragedy, if you will, is a collective one: there is a breakdown in that communication which is at the basis of human society and which is epitomized by the Greek term λόγος. I would argue that the chorus' song is an important additional factor in this breakdown, representing an element of communication in human society which only happens in song and dance. Other critics, of course, read the play as an optimistic restoration of Philoktetes to his proper place. See, for example, Schein 2001. Scott 1996, 175 also reads the play optimistically and describes the chorus as "a powerful vehicle of the eventual accomplishment of both goals, the saving of Philoctetes and the taking of Troy."

[12] It is possible to integrate it with the other songs if, as Schmidt 1977, 132–3 does, we assume that the whole song is a lie designed to strengthen Philoktetes' trust in Neoptolemos.

[13] Critics differ in their interpretation of the sincerity of this pity. Gardiner 1987, 18, and Blundell 1989, 195, for example, see the chorus' pity as shallow and ineffective, while Burton 1980, 228, and Reinhardt, 1979, 182, believe that Sophokles' purpose in allowing the chorus to express pity for Philoktetes is to arouse the audience's sympathy for him. As will become clear in what follows I see the chorus' expression of pity in the parodos, the second half of its split song, and its sole independent stasimon as the product of the chorus' understanding of Philoktetes' suffering. This disinterested sympathy for Philoktetes, which is based on an understanding of the place of mankind in the order of things, fades as the play progresses. It is replaced by Neoptolemos' pity

an actor like any other in the play, its pity becomes one of the chorus' salient emotional characteristics, allowing it to be allied to Neoptolemus' intensifying compassion for Philoktetes, while it remains loyal, in other ways, to Odysseus' plan. As I have made clear in the discussion of the *Antigone*, however, I do not believe that a psychological reading of the chorus proves adequate to its nature as a collective body that expresses itself largely through song and dance. If we refrain from such a psychological reading, how do we understand the chorus' pity as a serious and important expression of its separate consciousness?

Aristotle, in the *Art of Rhetoric*, defines pity as an emotion which arises out of viewing another's undeserved suffering, a condition which one imagines could be one's own: ἔστω δὴ ἔλεος λύπη τις ἐπὶ φαινομένῳ κακῷ φθαρτικῷ ἢ λυπηρῷ τοῦ ἀναξίου τυγχάνειν, ὃ κἂν αὐτὸς προσδοκήσειεν ἂν παθεῖν ἢ τῶν αὐτοῦ τινα…, 'Let pity be a kind of pain felt at the appearance of an ill, destructive or painful and undeserved, by one who could imagine himself or one of his own experiencing the same thing…,' *Rhetorica*, 1385b14–16. As we will see when we look at the chorus' song, its pity is based on the belief that Philoketes' suffering is undeserved, the product of divine will and not wrongdoing on his part. Unlike the actors, who focus on Philoktetes' immediate physical circumstances and the problem he poses to the successful completion of their mission, the chorus views Philoktetes as a resource for understanding the human condition. Philoktetes' isolation and helplessness confirm the chorus' particular perspective that humans are limited in their ability to act autonomously and need a larger context than what they achieve by their individual action to make their lives understandable and seem coherent, let alone bearable. The chorus' pity arises out of its understanding that Philoktetes is an extreme example of the suffering which all humans are potentially subject to, because of their vulnerability to powers outside their individual control.[14] Its pity is the clearest expression of the chorus' unique

for Philoktetes, which is based on a growing personal understanding between the two men. The difference between Neoptolemos' and the chorus' pity is not sincerity but its source in intimate connection, on the one hand, and in a disinterested view of the human condition on the other. It is an important feature of the play that Neoptolemos' pity leads him to a decision which condemns both Philoktetes and himself to a painful and stunted future, while the chorus' pity is independent of the necessary action but slowly fades from our hearing.

[14] Rose 1976 sees the chorus' role in the play as helping to bring out the sophistic themes of the fragility of the human condition in a presocial state and the need for the social contract, while at the same time representing the "ordinary mass of human

point of view and exists in contradiction to its involvement, at other moments, in the movement of the play's action.[15] In the expression of pity the chorus' language demonstrates the same lack of concern with cause and effect, with action and consequence, with events anchored in a temporal sequence that we have seen in the *Antigone*. Through it the chorus performs its particular function, to acknowledge a different context for understanding what happens, in which the divine order is always present. It is this perspective which is put at risk by the inconsistency of the chorus' voice.

When the chorus lends its voice to the project of deceiving Philoktetes and getting him to Troy no matter what, it betrays its own understanding of what Philoktetes represents: not the necessary tool for victorious action but the pitiable evidence of a necessary state of human helplessness. Song in this play both creates a deceitful illusion to further the goals of the action and expresses a compassionate vision of the larger context in which Philoktetes' suffering has a meaningful place. This doubled function brings song itself into question as a resource for creating an expansive moral understanding of what happens in the world. When the chorus sings to deceive, its language and its performance have the same features as when it expresses pity for Philoktetes, and those features mark a difference between the language and point of view of the chorus and the actors. But, as a result of its double and shifting purpose, it shares with the actors' language the same uncertain relationship to truthful or persuasive representation.

Thus it is the very form of choral expression, along with the pity it expresses, that is continually hollowed out and made illusory; in the end it is completely silenced. The limited capacity of the chorus to express itself coincides with the limitations imposed on all perspectives in the play. Beyond the morally disorienting question of the line between truth

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beings" (97) who, by their subservience to Odysseus, due to their social status, reveal the dangers of contemporary sophism's manner of educating leaders. I see the chorus' evocation of the fragility of human existence as a reflection of its unique understanding, based on its exclusion from initiating action and its ability to picture and activate the relationship of man to the divine in its song. It is my assumption that the chorus' special role prevents its identity from being fully defined by class distinctions between it and the actors.

[15] Schmidt 1977, 52–53 notes the striking expression of pity on the part of the chorus but argues that they abandon this feeling for the rest of the play, after Neoptolemos insists that Philoktetes' condition is the result of divine will (191–200). In keeping with their character as Neoptolemos' subordinates they maintain the point of view Neoptolemos offers them here, even as Neoptolemos himself changes and deepens his understanding.

and illusion, the characters in the *Philoktetes* are also unable to act upon whatever moral perspective they seem to hold. Odysseus is reduced from a ruthless and powerful pursuer of the Greeks', or his own, victory to a comic figure hiding behind a bush in his last appearance in the play;[16] Neoptolemos is prevented by the intensity of Philoktetes' resistance from acting on his deeper understanding of why, for the good of all, Philoktetes must go to Troy; and Philoktetes abandons his seemingly principled, persuasively expressed, but ultimately self-destructive resistance without any explanation, when Herakles appears and contradicts him. Herakles' sudden appearance at the end of the play and the perspective he brings are never translated into a human understanding of why things must be as he says. Just as the actors cannot realize their capacity to act, the chorus cannot bring its awareness of a larger order to bear on its perception of the human world; its song is finally disconnected from both the physical reality of the action and the nature of its own perception.[17] In the tragic world that the audience enters in this play, all we witness are shadows and echoes of unfulfilled and perhaps unrealizable possibilities. Here we will examine how the fragmentation of the chorus' voice and its participation in the deceit enacts the failure of its particular perspective to provide a resource for the audience's understanding.

1) *The Parodos: A Divided World*

στρ. α
ΧΟ. τί χρὴ τί χρή με, δέσποτ', ἐν ξένᾳ ξένον
στέγειν, ἢ τί λέγειν πρὸς ἄνδρ' ὑπόπταν;
φράζε μοι.
τέχνα γὰρ τέχνας ἑτέρας
προὔχει καὶ γνώμα παρ' ὅτῳ τὸ θεῖον
Διὸς σκῆπτρον ἀνάσσεται.
σὲ δ', ὦ τέκνον, τόδ' ἐλήλυθεν
πᾶν κράτος ὠγύγιον· τό μοι ἔννεπε
τί σοι χρεὼν ὑπουργεῖν.

ἀντ. α
ΧΟ. μέλον πάλαι μέλημά μοι λέγεις, ἄναξ,
φρουρεῖν ὄμμ' ἐπὶ σῷ μάλιστα καιρῷ·
νῦν δέ μοι
λέγ' αὐλὰς ποίας ἔνεδρος
ναίει καὶ χῶρον τίν' ἔχει. τὸ γάρ μοι
μαθεῖν οὐκ ἀποκαίριον,
μὴ προσπεσών με λάθῃ ποθέν·
τίς τόπος, ἢ τίς ἕδρα; τίν' ἔχει στίβον,
ἔναυλον ἢ θυραῖον;

[16] See Taplin 1971, 37 for the argument that Sophokles evokes the comic genre through the figure of Odysseus at the end of the play.

[17] R.A. Martin 1993, 127–138 describes the movement of the play as a slow undermining of each character's social values.

ΝΕ. νῦν μέν, ἴσως γὰρ τόπον ἐσχατιαῖς
προσιδεῖν ἐθέλεις ὅντινα κεῖται,
δέρκου θαρσῶν· ὁπόταν δὲ μόλῃ
δεινὸς ὁδίτης τῶνδ' οὐκ μελάθρων,
πρὸς ἐμὴν αἰεὶ χεῖρα προχωρῶν
πειρῶ τὸ παρὸν θεραπεύειν.

ΝΕ. οἶκον μὲν ὁρᾷς τόνδ' ἀμφίθυρον
πετρίνης κοίτης.
ΧΟ. ποῦ γὰρ ὁ τλήμων αὐτὸς ἄπεστιν;
ΝΕ. δῆλον ἔμοιγ' ὡς φορβῆς χρείᾳ
στίβον ὀγμεύει τῇδε πέλας που.
ταύτην γὰρ ἔχειν βιοτῆς αὐτὸν
λόγος ἐστὶ φύσιν θηροβολοῦντα
πτηνοῖς ἰοῖς σμυγερὸν σμυγερῶς,
οὐδέ τιν' αὐτῷ.
παιῶνα κακῶν ἐπινωμᾶν.

στρ. β
ΧΟ. οἰκτίρω νιν ἔγωγ', ὅπως,
μή του κηδομένου βροτῶν
μηδὲ σύντροφον ὄμμ' ἔχων,
δύστανος, μόνος αἰεί,
νοσεῖ μὲν νόσον ἀγρίαν,
ἀλύει δ' ἐπὶ παντί τῳ
χρείας ἱσταμένῳ. πῶς ποτε πῶς δύσμορος
ἀντέχει;
ὦ παλάμοι θεῶν,
ὦ δύστανα γένη βροτῶν,
οἷς μὴ μέτριος αἰών.

ἀντ. β
ΧΟ. οὗτος πρωτογόνων ἴσως
οἴκων οὐδενὸς ὕστερος,
πάντων ἄμμορος ἐν βίῳ
κεῖται μοῦνος ἀπ' ἄλλων
στικτῶν ἢ λασίων μετὰ
θηρῶν, ἔν τ' ὀδύναις ὁμοῦ
λιμῷ τ' οἰκτρὸς ἀνήκεστ'
ἀμερίμνητά τ' ἔχων βάρη
ἁ δ' ἀθυρόστομος
Ἀχὼ τηλεφανὴς πικραῖς
οἰμωγαῖς ὑπακούει.

ΝΕ. οὐδὲν τούτων θαυμαστὸν ἐμοί·
θεῖα γάρ, εἴπερ κἀγώ τι φρονῶ,
καὶ τὰ παθήματα κεῖνα πρὸς αὐτὸν
τῆς ὠμόφρονος Χρύσης ἐπέβη,
καὶ νῦν ἃ πονεῖ δίχα κηδεμόνων,
οὐκ ἔσθ' ὡς οὐ θεῶν του μελέτη
τοῦ μὴ πρότερον τόνδ' ἐπὶ Τροίᾳ
τεῖναι τὰ θεῶν ἀμάχητα βέλη,
πρὶν ὅδ' εξήκοι χρόνος, ᾧ λέγεται
χρῆναί σφ' ὑπὸ τῶνδε δαμῆναι.

στρ. γ
ΧΟ. εὔστομ' ἔχε, παῖ. ΝΕ. τί τόδε;
ΧΟ. προὐφάνη κτύπος,
φωτὸς σύντροφος ὡς τειρομένου ⟨του⟩,
ἤ που τᾷδε ἢ τᾷδε τόπων.
βάλλει βάλλει μ' ἐτύμα
φθογγά του στίβον κατ' ἀνάγ-
καν ἕρποντος, οὐδέ με λά-
θει βαρεῖα τηλόθεν αὐ-
δὰ τρυσάνωρ· διάσημα θρηνεῖ.

ἀντ. γ
ΧΟ. ἀλλ' ἔχε, τέκνον…ΝΕ λέγ' ὅ τι.
ΧΟ. φροντίδας νέας·
ὡς οὐκ ἔξεδρος, ἀλλ' ἔντοπος ἀνήρ,
οὐ μολπὰν σύριγγος ἔχων,
ὡς ποιμὴν ἀγροβάτας,
ἀλλ' ἤ που πταίων ὑπ' ἀναγ-
κας βοᾷ τηλωπὸν ἰω-
άν, ἢ ναὸς ἄξενον αὐ-
γάζων ὅρμον· προβοᾷ τι δεινόν.

The parodos introduces the audience to the problem posed by this chorus: to what degree can it achieve an independent voice that expresses a coherent perspective on the action of the play? Whose interpretation of events will gain authority in the audience's mind? It starts with an address to Neoptolemos, who shares the song with the chorus by interspersing spoken anapaestic lines between its sung stanzas;[18] in the last pair of stanzas, he actually participates in the first line of the song. The questioning of the chorus' independent voice implicit in the shape of this shared parodos is strengthened by the chorus' request that Neoptolemos dictate what it should and should not say to Philoktetes (135–6); it openly acknowledges Neoptolemos' authority as a 'sceptered ruler', and in particular as the ruler of its speech (138–40). From its first words a question is raised about the authority and independence of the chorus' own speech. This question is reinforced metrically by the rhythm of the initial line, which is an iambic trimeter, the rhythm that belongs largely to the actors in the drama. Of course, iambic rhythms often appear as periods in the odes of Sophoklean odes, but a full iambic trimeter isolated in this way is rare. If it is the case here, as I would consider likely, that the iambic trimeter line in the stasimon is delivered differently—more like speaking than singing[19]—, this must have been a very startling and unexpected beginning to choral song, especially the first one in the play.[20] It is as if Sophocles announces metrically, right from the start, that this chorus is in danger of collapsing into the action and of never finding its own voice.

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[18] Burton 1980, 228 interprets the interspersing of the chorus' lyric with Neoptolemos' anapaests as a way of establishing differences in mood: the chorus is anxious, while Neoptolemos is practical. While such interpretations which place metrical differences on a emotional or "tonal" scale may well point to one aspect of the different effect of Neoptolemos' and the chorus' words, they ignore the non-naturalistic elements of the performance. This scene does not simply present a calm commander speaking to his excited subordinates, but an actor gesturing and walking as he speaks and a chorus dancing and singing its response. As we have seen in the *Antigone*, such a modal difference demands more than a psychological description of the difference between the two.

[19] See Dale 1968, 208 for a discussion of the delivery of iambic trimeters in choral passages. Since the use of an iambic trimeter line in the course of an ode is relatively frequent in this play, it seems a deliberate effect, which Sophokles knew would be heightened by the manner of its delivery.

[20] See Gardiner 1987, 20–21 for a discussion of the effect of the use of iambic meters in the chorus' song. Both she and Scott 1996, 308 n. 192 understand the use of iambics as a way of making the tone appropriate to a practical interchange between soldiers. I would go one step farther, however, and say that that tone sits in uneasy relationship with other parts of the chorus' song, that are fully lyric in tone.

But if the parodos suggests that the chorus will not achieve autonomy and thus an independent dramatic presence, it also gives the audience an experience of the chorus' distinct perspective and mode of expression.[21] Even as the chorus signals its subordination to Neoptolemos' words, it asserts its own independent form of speech, not only by its delivery of words in song (apart, perhaps, from the trimeter line), accompanied by dance, but also in the striking use of lyric characteristics such as repetition, alliteration, assonance and anaphora.[22] Consider for instance the repetitions of the first line of strophe and antistrophe a: τί χρή, τί χρή με, δέσποτ', ἐν ξένᾳ ξένον (135) and μέλον πάλαι μέλημά μοι λέγεις, ἄναξ (150); or the striking repetition of *alphas* and *etas* in the description of Philoktetes' burden of suffering and Echo's companionship: ἀνήκεστ' ἀμερίμνητά τ' ἔχων βάρη./ ἁ δ' ἀθυρόστομος Ἀχὼ τηλεφανὴς…(186–189). This distinctive voice reaches its fullest expression in the middle of the song.

The middle strophe and antistrophe are a continuous song uninterrupted by Neoptolemos' interjection and create the only part of the parodos for which Neoptolemos is not the explicit audience; the middle thus contrasts with the beginning and end of the song, which require Neoptolemos' presence to complete them.[23] In the first line of these stanzas appears the word ἔγωγε (169), which marks the song here as the chorus' own particular version of things and makes a deliberate contrast with the addresses to Neoptolemos that appear in the first lines of all the other stanzas.[24]

In this middle part of the parodos the chorus turns from the question of how best to serve Neoptolemos and from the investigation of the physical space as the setting for future action and offers its own

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[21] Kittmer 1995, 20–21 describes the two modes of the parodos as 'conventional' and 'realistic.' He sees the chorus as characterized throughout the play by a merging of opposing stances—deceit and sympathy, or convention and realism—that make it impossible for the audience to know what it is saying.

[22] Burton 1980, 230 notes the use of repetition in the parodos and interprets it as a way of emphasizing the emotional content of the song.

[23] Ibid., 231 comments on the metrical differences between the opening and closing stanzas and the middle ones and sees them as especially suitable to the different emotions of excitement in the first case and pathos in the second.

[24] Kamerbeek 1980, 48 asserts that these middle stanzas which express sympathy for Philoktetes are "in no way conflicting with the role [the chorus] have to play as Neoptolemus' supporters in the fraud." He does not explain why he thinks there is no conflict or why Sophokles has created formal differences between these stanzas and the rest of the song.

interpretation of what it has witnessed in Philoktetes' cave. Philoktetes deserves pity, it states unequivocally: οἰκτίρω νιν ἔγωγ' (169), again emphasizing that the pity is particularly its own. This judgment is grounded in an understanding and perspective that originate in the chorus' identity as a collective body that does not bear any responsibility for the action.[25] Its pity arises out of Philoktetes' isolation in his misery (μή του κηδομένου βροτῶν/ μηδὲ σύντροφον ὄμμ' ἔχων,/ δύστανος, μόνος αἰεί..., 'without the care of a human being or a companion's face, miserable, always alone...' (170–73)) and its recognition of the excessive suffering which is visited upon him by forces outside his control.[26] Its lament that he is μοῦνος ἄπ' ἄλλων, 'isolated from others' (183) despite his family's prominence (οὗτος πρωτογόνων ἴσως/ οἴκων οὐδενὸς ὕστερος, 'this man, second to no one from the most prominent families' (180–181)) shows the degree to which the chorus' pity is inspired by Philoktetes' vulnerability to suffering: neither his prominent family nor his heroic actions have protected him. His story thus confirms the chorus' sense that all mankind is subject to undeserved suffering, no matter who you are. The chorus feels pity for his vulnerability and isolation when neither Neoptolemos nor Odysseus does because, as a chorus, it understands the limited power of agency to protect or determine a man's fortune and the need for communal life to assure one's humanity. That the chorus would be particularly aware of the latter necessity because of the communal nature of its speech and movement (action, that is) is suggested by the last image of this central strophe and antistrophe, the image of Echo alone responding to Philoktetes' voice: ἁ δ'

[25] Blundell 1989, 195 argues that the pity the chorus feels here is "flawed by the fact that they have no intention of acting on it." I am arguing that it is precisely because it does not bear responsibility for the action that the chorus can feel pity for Philoktetes here, when none of the actors do, and that its pity is not flawed by the inability to act but is a product of its perception of the limitation of human action. Later, when Neoptolemos feels pity for Philoktetes, it leads him to take a decision which the play finally judges as counter to what must be. The connection between pity and action is therefore complicated, in part by the chorus' perception that pity arises out of a perception of man's ultimate inability to protect himself from suffering by his action.

[26] Reference in the chorus' song to the forces which have caused Philoktetes' suffering depends on the cluster of words δύσμορος (175), ὦ παλάμαι θεῶν (176), and ὦ δύστανα γένη βροτῶν/ οἷς μὴ μέτριος αἰών (177–8) at the end of strophe b. Lachmann's reading, παλάμαι θεῶν, which Lloyd-Jones and Wilson, in the Oxford Classical Text, accept, for the mss. reading, παλάμαι θνητῶν, is not only metrically easier (see discussion in Jebb 1890, 37–38), but fits better the context of these lines, in which δύσμορος and μὴ μέτριος αἰών imply a Herodotean sense of the patterns of human existence outside of human control. For a different opinion see Kamerbeek 1980, 49 and Rose 1976, 59–60.

ἀθυρόστομος/ Ἀχω τηλεφανὴς πικραῖς/ οἰμωγαῖς ὑπακούει, 'Babbling echo, far away, answers his bitter cries' (188–90).[27] In this image the adjectives ἀθυρόστομος[28] and τηλεφανὴς describe two aspects of Echo: her playful, meaningless voice and her physical distance from the one she echoes. The lack of another's physical and meaningful presence, which Echo metaphorically represents, stands in stark contrast to the chorus members' own echoing of each other in song. Each member of the chorus hears his words echoed back to him by other members of the chorus, but this echoing happens within the context of the physical connection between them in the patterns of dance and the authority of choral song. Thus the chorus feels in a particular way the desolation and futility of a disconnected voice that only echoes itself.

The pity that the chorus expresses is a product of its sensitivity to man's place in the order of things, both in relation to other men and to the gods. Pity only comes, Aristotle tells us, if we realize that we are vulnerable to a similar kind of suffering. Because it interprets Philoktetes' suffering in the context of the general human condition, as it understands it, the chorus feels itself vulnerable to the same kind of suffering in a way the actors don't. Neoptolemus, in his response to these stanzas, counters the chorus' pity with a matter-of-fact statement about the utility of Philoktetes' suffering for the overall plan the gods have for Troy (191–200). His understanding of divine purpose, at this point in the play, is that it serves the goals and processes of human action; gods are allies rather than a force which can work against him and bring him random suffering.[29] Philoktetes' misfortune was necessary because the time for Troy to fall had not yet come. Divine plans and human actions run on parallel tracks, the one serving the other and together accomplishing what is necessary. Since Philoktetes had the power to use the bow autonomously against Troy before it was time, the gods had to intervene '...that he not direct too early the invincible

[27] This is the Oxford Classical Text's reading. Willink 2003, 84 prefers Musgrave's and Dain-Mazon's reading πικρὰς/ οἰμωγὰς ὑποχεῖται. With this reading the desolate image of Echo as Philoktetes' only companion and respondent is weakened.

[28] ἀθυρόστομος is not attested elsewhere. Webster 1970, 83 draws attention to Euripides' use of Echo in the opening of the *Andromeda* and, correctly I think, understands the word here to have the connotation "'babbling and therefore useless."

[29] Minadeo 1993–5, 91–2 descibes Neoptolemos' evocation of the divine plan here as "frigid theology:" "That this reaction is studied and disingenuous is assured by the fact that Neoptolemus' machinations of entrapment and deceit disavow any real faith in divine providence."

arrows of the gods against Troy,'... μὴ πρότερον τόνδ' ἐπὶ Τροίᾳ τεῖναι τὰ θεῶν ἀμάχητα βέλη, (197–198). This agency-centered view of the world does not consider Philoktetes' suffering as evidence for Neoptolemos' own vulnerability or for the illusory nature of autonomous being and action.[30]

Here then, in the center of the parodos, we hear clearly the voice of the chorus and understand the nature of the conflict between the chorus' point of view and the actor's. But the final stanzas of the parodos reunite the voices of the chorus and Neoptolemos, as they were united at the beginning of the song: the chorus again addresses Neoptolemus directly, and Neoptolemus joins in the first line of the song. Yet the extent of the chorus' subordination to Neoptolemos remains an open question. In the final stanza Sophokles has the chorus address Neoptolemos as 'child,' παῖ and τέκνον, not 'master,' ἄναξ or δέσποτα, as it did at the beginning. Furthermore it asserts its own capacity for correct interpretation of the signs it encounters, rather than asking Neoptolemos to interpret the evidence for it. The end of the song, therefore, gives us a chorus both responsive to Neoptolemos' command and expressive of its own independent vision.

The chorus' language at the end of the parodos illuminates further the nature and source of that vision. In the final stanzas the chorus interprets sounds,[31] not the physical manifestations of Philoktetes' activities which Neoptolemos interpreted in his anapaests (159–68); and it does so in relation to the general human condition: κτύπος,/ φωτὸς σύντροφος ὡς τειρομένου ⟨του⟩, 'a sound which is like the companion of some desperate man' (201–2); ἐτύμα/ φθόγγά του στίβον κατ' ἀνάγ-/ καν ἕρποντος,[32] 'the true voice of a man crawling along a track under constraint' (205–7); βαρεῖα τηλόθεν αὐ-/δὰ τρυσάνωρ, 'from far away

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[30] Winnington-Ingram 1980, 285 attributes the difference in the chorus' reaction and Neoptolemos' to disparity of age: the chorus members' experience of life gives them the capacity to pity; Neoptolemos is too young and inexperienced. This explanation is not incompatible with my reading, but I would argue that there is another dimension to their difference which comes not from their different ages but from their different understanding of man's position in relation to the gods arising from their different relation to choice and action. See Gardiner 1987, 18–19 and Schmidt 1977, 52–54 for a different reading of the nature of the chorus' pity and Neoptolemos' response to it.

[31] Seale 1982, 31 comments on this shift to a focus on sounds as a way of heightening the drama of Philoktetes' imminent appearance. It also marks the chorus' particular authority here in contrast to Neoptolemos' knowledge of the physcial space.

[32] Webster 1970, 85 prefers τοῶ to του here to eliminate two indefinite pronouns, in 202 and in 206.

the heavy utterance of a man worn out' (208–9). Note the generalizing force of the indefinite pronouns and the adjective τρυσάνωρ. All these references to voice and sound occur in the third strophe, which concludes with the statement διάσημα θρηνεῖ, 'he wails clearly' (209). The chorus 'reads' with confidence the vocal signs that speak to it of the general condition of suffering which Philoktetes shares in. It is as if it is hearing music, rather than reconstructing the details of Philoktetes' particular narrative, as the physical evidence it viewed earlier required it to do.

This sense of how the chorus hears and interprets according to its own perspective becomes more explicit when it sings, in the final antistrophe, of the contrast between the song it would expect to hear in this deserted landscape and the sound it actually hears. The image of what Philoktetes is not—the shepherd playing his pipe (μολπὰν σύριγγος ἔχων,/ ὡς ποιμὴν ἀγροβάτας, 213–4)—gives us the normative picture of how a man might be alone in a barren landscape and nonetheless part of a community;[33] the sound the shepherd makes is a traditionally established form of song. The chorus contrasts this sound with Philoktetes' cry of ἰώ, which does not belong to any recognizable social context.[34] The chorus offers two possible interpretations of this unusual 'song:' it is an expression either of his physical pain or of his surprise at seeing a ship in the usually deserted harbour. In either case the cry is δεινόν (219), because it reveals either helplessness or isolation, in contrast to the song of the shepherd. By juxtaposing its interpretation of Philoktetes' cry to what it would expect to hear in this context, the chorus allows us to view Philoktetes for a moment not as the object of Odysseus' plot, as someone instrumental to the necessary act of taking Troy, but as an example of the frightening and inexplicable twists that the course of a human life can take. The chorus' use of sound and song for its interpretation reminds us that this perspective arises out of its own mode of expression and implicitly sets up a contrast with the

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[33] Rose 1976, 60 interprets this moment as Sophokles' denial of the "pleasant pastoral associations which isolation might have for a contemporary audience" and emphasis on the "horrors of real, total isolation from human society." However, the words do not assert the unpleasantness of the shepherd's isolation; they contrast one kind of (pleasant) isolation, which happens in the context of community, with Philoktetes' absolute isolation.

[34] See N. Worman 2000, 1–36, for a discussion of the metaphoric interplay of Philoktetes' bestial language and his wound. My view of Philoctetes' language is of a far broader, indeed remarkable, range of kinds of speech than Worman allows him.

kind of interpretation the actors—and specifically Neoptolemos—make, with their need to view Philoktetes instrumentally.

Juxtaposed to this independent perspective is the chorus' address to Neoptolemos at the beginning of the final antistrophe: ἀλλ' ἔχε, τέκνον...ΝΕΟ. λέγ' ὅ τι... ΧΟ. φροντίδας νέας, 'but take, child...(Neo.) say, what...thought again' (210). As in the first strophe, the chorus addresses itself to Neoptolemos' plan with a vocative and imperative, and urges Neoptolemos to decide what to do in the light of Philoktetes' imminent return. Here once again its function seems to be to respond to Neoptolemos' command. The dual purpose of the song in the final two stanzas parallels the division we have noticed in the song as a whole, a division between the demands of the action and the chorus' expression of its own understanding of Philoktetes' life. The chorus pities Philoktetes because he makes evident a dependency and helplessness to which all are vulnerable. As a chorus, which sees its role as the representation of a larger order in which humans express their place through song and dance, not action, it is particularly suited to understand and interpret for the audience Philoktetes' situation. But in as much as the chorus enters into the demands of the action, it also views Philoktetes, and itself, as part of the Greek army, to be manipulated by its commanders in order to achieve a goal.[35] The formal balance of this song offers the chorus' double point of view in a form that suggests the tension between the doubleness, while also creating an aesthetic whole.[36]

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[35] In the two iambic lines which the chorus contributes in the next episode (317–318), it reopens this doubleness by refering to its pity for Philoktetes as τοῖς ἀφιγμένοις ἴσα, 'equal to those who have come (before).' Philoktetes has made clear that other visitors' pity has not led to any action. By making its pity equivalent to these visitors', it recognizes its pity as existing in a different realm from its particpation in the planned action. See Blundell 1989, 194–5 and Gardiner 1987, 21–22 for two different discussions of the irony of these lines.

[36] Many critics have tried to explain the doubleness of the chorus' attitude towards Philoktetes, exemplified in the parodos. Reinhardt 1979, 182 accepts that the chorus has a dual role in the play, to support the intrigue and to accompany Philoktetes' suffering with a sympathetic voice. He asserts that "[o]ne has no more right to require that [the chorus] should always sustain the same role than to criticize an orchestral accompaniment for changing its style according to the nature of the drama." I am sympathetic to his sensitivty to the chorus' song as a kind of musical accompaniment to the action, but the analogy between an orchestra's style and the chorus' role does not, I think, represent accurately the chorus' presence on the stage. Because the chorus is given a character, as Gardiner 1987, 13–49 shows, the inconsistency in attitude is surprising. Gardiner attempts to show that it is not, in fact, inconsistent; I ascribe the

2) *The Song of Lies*

στρ. α
ὀρεστέρα παμβῶτι Γᾶ,
μᾶτερ αὐτοῦ Διός
ἃ τὸν μέγαν Πακτωλὸν εὔχρυσον νέμεις,
σὲ κἀκεῖ, μᾶτερ πότνι', ἐπηυδώμαν,
ὅτ' ἐς τόνδ' Ἀτρειδᾶν
ὕβρις πᾶσ' ἐχώρει,
ὅτε τὰ πάτρια τεύχεα παρεδίδοσαν,
ἰὼ μάκαιρα ταυροκτόνων
λεόντων ἔφεδρε, τῷ Λαρτίου,
σέβας ὑπέρτατον.

ἀντ. α
οἴκτιρ', ἄναξ· πολλῶν ἔλε-
ξεν δυσοίστων πόνων
ἆθλ', οἷα μηδεὶς τῶν ἐμῶν τύχοι φίλων,
εἰ δὲ πικρούς, ἄναξ, ἔχθεις Ἀτρείδας,
ἐγὼ μὲν, τὸ κείνων
κακὸν τῷδε κέρδος
μέγα τιθέμενος, ἔνθαπερ ἐπιμέμονεν.
ἐπ' εὐστόλου ταχείας νεὼς
πορεύσαιμ' ἂν ἐς δόμους, τὰν θεῶν
νέμεσιν ἐκφυγών.

The question the parodos raises about the doubled and irreconcilable roles of the chorus seems to get a disconcerting answer in the next song. This song occurs during the next episode, in which Neoptolemos and Philoktetes confront each other for the first time; its only pair of stanzas are separated from each other by a hundred lines of dialogue between Philoktetes and Neoptolemos. The interjection of choral song in the course of an episode mirrors the way Neoptolemos' comments form part of the parodos, sustaining a dramatic structure that draws attention to the interweaving of chorus' and actors' roles as a significant feature of the play.[37] When the chorus sings the strophe, Neoptolemos has just lied about his anger at the Atreidai in order to win Philoktetes' confidence, in accordance with Odysseus' instructions. Instead of delivering the expected two-line comment providing *pro forma* closure to the speech, the chorus bursts into an "excited iambo-dochmiac strophe"[38] whose purpose is ostensibly to reinforce and give credence to Neoptolemos' lie. If this were the only significance of this burst of song, one could argue that the chorus has been absorbed completely into

"inconsistency" to the difference in the chorus' understanding when its song serves the goals of the action and when it sings from a detached choral perspective.

[37] Webster 1970, 96 sees these short bursts of song as adding emotional intensity and breaking up "a very long act." The passages he cites as parallel to this one, in the *Oedipus Tyrannos* and the *Oedipus at Colonus*, are dialogues between chorus and actors, and the strophes and antistrophes are not separated as radically as they are here. The unusual nature of the chorus' song here serves a more startling purpose than Webster allows, I think.

[38] Ibid., 95.

the action of the play and is, for all intents and purposes, performing as an actor here.

But the chorus' performance at this moment is more complicated than a simple plot device or punctuation mark, which could have been accomplished equally well by the expected iambic lines. By defying the expectation of the chorus' mode of delivery at this moment, Sophokles draws the audience's attention to the fact of its singing and dancing and to the use of this characteristic mode of expression at an unusual moment and for an unusual purpose. The mixture of iambs and dochmiacs invites the audience to be particularly aware of the nature of the chorus' performance; as in the parodos, the initial iambs (and particularly the third line, which is a trimeter and, as we have seen, is likely to have been spoken and not sung) play with the expectation that the chorus will speak not sing here. The dochmiacs which follow, however, launch the song into a fully 'lyric' performance.[39]

To the extent that the audience recognizes that the chorus uses its song to lie, its attention is drawn to the cooption of the chorus' very mode of expression, its singing, into the deceitful illusion Odysseus has orchestrated. Critics have shown some resistence to calling the song a lie.[40] Webster claims that the chorus carefully preserves its integrity by only falsifying an account of a past prayer and not actually invoking Cybele as a false witness here.[41] Gardiner points out that Cybele is not a "legitimate" Olympian god and that a false invocation of her is not blasphemous.[42] This reluctance to acknowledge a song as a lie stems, I believe, from a sense that normally choral song does not belong on a matrix of truth and falsehood. How can a song be true or a hymn false? The authority of this form of speech arises from a continuous

[39] See Schein 1988, 200 for the opinion that the chorus' use of dochmiacs and iambo-trochaic cola is particularly associated in the play with the chorus' deceit of Philoktetes. Dochmiacs and iambic cola are, of course, commonly found in association; I would simply argue that the presence of an iambic trimeter, if delivered differently, gives the iambs another association as well, with the actors' language.

[40] An exception is Bers 1981, 500–504.

[41] Webster 1970, 96.

[42] Gardiner 1987, 24–6. She also argues, as do Webster ibid. and Stokes 1988, 158–159 that the chorus is not actually uttering an oath or making a prayer here and therefore is not perjuring itself. Burton 1980, 232 points out the Trojan and Homeric associations of the goddess, who is invoked in Homeric oaths, and Webster mentions the goddess' temple in the agora. It seems unlikely, on the basis of her presence in Homer and in the agora, that the audience would have viewed her entirely as a foreign god to whom no reverence is due.

tradition of performance whose truth-claim is based not on a relationship with historical fact but on the achievement of certain formal requirements.

A careful consideration of what the chorus sings, however, confirms the possibility that Sophokles here wants to falsify song itself.[43] The chorus calls on Γῆ, presumably to bear witness to Neoptolemos' account of the Atreidai's outrage against him, just as, the chorus claims, it did at the time of the outrage itself.[44] Just as Neoptolemos' narrative uses a past fictional event to give credence to a present false emotion, so the chorus uses a past fictional performance of a prayer to give authority to its present, deceitful repetition of that prayer. The lie not only confirms a false present moment but also falsifies the past to give the present credibility. In referring in the present to a past performance, the chorus consciously manipulates the very basis for the authority of its song, the repeated performance of an established form. It is exactly this repetition of performance that gives the chorus credence here, so that the false construction of that repeated performance goes to the heart of song's credibility. In attempting to confirm Neoptolemos' lie, which is necessary for the advancement of the plot, the chorus brings into question the authority of its own performance as chorus.

To complicate this moment further, Sophokles has made it impossible for the audience to know for sure what parts of Neoptolemos' narrative and the chorus' song are actually lies.[45] In the Homeric tradition the Atreidai do in fact give Achilles' armor to Odysseus,

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[43] Reinhardt 1979, 170–171 discusses the traditional form of the prayer here, and the importance of the subversion of a tradtional form by the need to decieve for the theme of the "interplay of illusion and reality" which he sees as an element integral to the play's meaning.

[44] Calder 1971, 159 thinks that the prayer the chorus is refering to here is the one it made when the Atreidai gave the arms to Odysseus originally, long before Neoptolemos' arrival at Troy. He argues that the reference to Neoptolemos in l. 396 can be explained by the moment on that occasion "when presumably the Atreidai had slandered Neoptolemos." This explanation, which I find far-fetched, does not deal with the fact that the chorus is trying to create the impression that it is refering to the incident Neoptolemos has falsely recounted in his speech.

[45] As Blundell 1989, 195 puts it, "It is hard to draw a line between fact and fiction in this puzzling narrative." She points out that Neoptolemos' anger at being deprived of his father's arms must be plausible, whether or not it is "true." Calder 1971, 157–9, on the other hand, makes a strong argument for a reading of the speech as an outright lie. Those critics who suggest that the audience cannot easily sort out what is true and what is false in the speech are unlikely to be suffering from "Neoptolemos-idolatry," as Calder claims, but rather are alert to the way that Sophokles keeps Neoptolemos an unreadable figure.

although Odysseus then gives it back to Neoptolemos when he arrives at Troy.[46] It is also clear, as Sophokles shows in the *Ajax*, that fathers traditionally hand down armor to their sons. The account of Odysseus' acquisition of Achilles' armor will therefore not appear to the audience to be an unambiguous lie, and Neoptolemos' description of his anger over the loss of the arms might be an accurate account of what he actually felt at the time.[47] The clearest falsification in the narrative is the temporal sequence. In the tradition Neoptolemos was not present when Agamemnon gave Odysseus the arms of Achilles, as he claims here to have been.[48] Moreover, the opening of the play establishes that Neoptolemos is not now angry at Odysseus or the Atreidai, whether or not he had been in the past, so his current anger must be fabricated, even if it recalls an actual past feeling. Given the possible uncertainty in the audience's mind about the boundaries between truth and fiction in Neoptolemos' story, it is interesting that, when the chorus sings to confirm the story, it draws attention specifically to the timing of the event, the one certain falsehood.[49] It evokes the moment of the handing over of the arms to Odysseus and its performance of a song at that moment. Whatever, in the audience's mind, may be true or not in Neoptolemos' story, the chorus' song is false in its account of the timing of its own past performance, since neither Neoptolemos nor the chorus was in Troy at the time.[50] Thus, while the audience may remain

[46] See Knox 1964, 191 n. 30 for the evidence for Odysseus' return of the arms. See Hoppin 1990a, 137–159 for a general survey of versions of Philoktetes' story prior to Sophokles' play.

[47] Knox ibid, 123 argues that Neoptolemos' lie is in imitation of his father, who was angry at the Atreidai for the loss of Briseis, and his father's values but serves to demonstrate how distant Neoptolemos is from the embodiment of such a heroic stance: "In fact, the lies Neoptolemos proceeds to tell present him as a sort of spurious Achilles."

[48] See Calder 1971, 156–8, for an account of the evidence for the timing of Neoptolemos' arrival in Troy.

[49] In line 395 the adverb ἐκεῖ describes a place (Troy) but the ὅτε in the next line focuses attention on a particular event which happened in that place and on the moment of its taking place; the ὅτε is repeated in line 399, empahsizing further the temporal "reality" of this fictional account.

[50] The final words of the song, σέβας ὑπέρτατον, have required explanation. Webster 1970, 97, Kamerbeek 1980, 78 and Jebb 1890, 72 all agree that they must be in appostion τὰ…τεύχεα three lines above but disagree on how closely the dative immediately before, τῷ Λαρτίου, is to be read with them, rather than with the distant verb παρεδίδοσαν. The dangling position of the words at the end of the song, in apposition to a noun three lines earlier which they do not easily describe, allows the audience to hear the words also as a general reference to the whole stanza and the act of invocation it both describes and performs. The words understood in this way are

in doubt about the extent of Neoptolemos' lie (establishing an enigma about Neoptolemos' state of mind which is sustained throughout the play),[51] the chorus plainly falsifies two essential aspects of its own form of expression.

The value of choral song depends both on its participation in a sequence of performative events and on the effectiveness of a performance in the moment.[52] But here the chorus deceptively manipulates the temporal aspects of performance, which go to the heart of song's power to make present the divine order in the course of its performance (σέβας ὑπέρτατον; see note 50). Falsifying both a present and a past performance threatens the source of the chorus' authority. Lying to strengthen Neoptolemos' plot doesn't make the chorus an actor; rather its manipulation of its own performance in the service of the plot makes it an untrustworthy representative of its own mode of expression. There could be no clearer way of bringing the voice of the chorus as performers into the morally and ethically unsettling blurring of truth and illusion that permeates the play.[53]

The antistrophe responding to this strophe further complicates for the audience the problem of how to hear the chorus' song. It occurs in a parallel moment later in the episode, after Philoktetes has supplicated Neoptolemos and begged, in a long and emotional speech, to be taken home. Here again the chorus would be expected to deliver a two-line response to Philoktetes' speech but instead bursts into song, not a prayer or hymn this time, but an exhortation of Neoptolemos to pity Philoktetes and honor his supplication. Unlike the strophe, which must be understood as a falsification of the choral voice, the antistrophe can

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highly ironic, since the chorus's invocation, which should be a serious performance of a ritual act, σέβας ὑπέρτατον, is deceitful.

[51] Seale 1982, whose description of the play of illusion in the *Philoktetes* captures convincingly the central element in the play's dramatic power, describes the importance of Neoptolemos' enigmatic presence: "One of the great theatrical contrasts of the play in fact is the inscrutability of Neoptolemus' actions and silences against the obviousness of Philoctetes, both in the sight he presents and the noise that he makes." (49) He argues, however, that the character of Neoptolemos finally becomes clear when he reappears to return the bow to Philoktetes. Since he makes that decision off stage and never discusses it, it seems that even this clear action is unreadable, while it may not be illusory.

[52] As we shall see, the relationship of song to the movement of time and sequential actions, linked by cause and effect, is an important element in the next two songs.

[53] See Reinhardt's reading of the play (1979, 162–92) for a sensitive understanding of the role deceitful language plays and an eloquent analysis of the tone and implications of the contrasting style of Philoktetes' language.

be heard equally well as a sincere plea to Neoptolemos on Philoktetes' behalf or as a device to further the success of Neoptolemos' deception.[54] The impossiblity of knowing the chorus' intent focuses attention on the uncertain role the chorus is playing in relation to the plot to deceive Philoktetes. The possibility that its pity is sincere denies the audience the option of simply absorbing the chorus into the illusion being created by Neoptolemos. The first words: οἴκτιρ' ἄναξ. πολλῶν ἔλεξεν δυσοίστων πόνων/ ἆθλ' οἷα μηδεὶς τῶν ἐμῶν τύχοι φίλων, 'Pity, lord. He has described trials of great and unbearable suffering such as I pray no one close to me experience,' (507–9), echo the central stanzas of the parodos in which, as we have seen, the expression of pity and all that that feeling implies about the human condition are associated with the chorus' own proper choral view of Philoktetes' situation. The connection between pity and Philoktetes' act of supplication strengthens the sense that the source of the chorus' attitude is a deep understanding of human dependency and fragility in the larger order of things.[55] The chorus follows the command to pity with a wish that its *philoi* be spared such trials. In so doing it expresses everyone's vulnerability to the forces which have caused Philoktetes' suffering through the use of a wish, a form which makes clear the impossibility of protecting oneself or one's *philoi* by one's own actions. It would be futile, in the chorus' eyes, to assert control; instead the wish attempts to mediate between the forces at work and their potential victims.

The first two lines of the antistrophe, therefore, might strike one as a genuine articulation of a recognizable choral point of view and a return to the perspective the chorus expresses in the middle of the parodos. But it also might be understood as a deliberate fabrication of that perspective, in keeping with the deceit of the strophe to which it responds metrically. The rest of the song is a masterly equivocation, which makes it impossible to determine which of these two interpretations is correct. The audience's uncertainty about how to hear the chorus' song enacts, then, the problem of the play. Choral performance (like other forms of

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[54] Kamerbeek 1980, 87, and Jebb 1890, 89 see the two possibilities as compatible: the chorus may well feel pity for Philoktetes, but it is using that pity to further the deceit. Gardiner 1987, 29 believes that the unusual separation of strophe and antistrophe serves to make it "indisputably clear" that the chorus is still lying.

[55] As Gould 1973, 100 usefully summarizes, suppliancy can be defined as "a plea for the protection of an acknowledged and magnanimous superior (and thus an acceptance of harmless inferiority), but also a threat to the integrity of the person supplicated." The act thus involves a sense of mutual vulnerability.

understanding) has been compromised as a resource for understanding and feeling the full implications of the action as it progresses.

Sophokles creates the equivocation in the rest of the antistrophe by ambiguous syntax, which leaves open to multiple interpretations the relationship of the different parts of a complex sentence, as we have seen him do also in the *Antigone*. The next line of the song (510) makes specific reference to Neoptolemos' deception and the pivotal fabrication of Neoptolemos' hatred of the Atreidai: εἰ δὲ πικρούς, ἄναξ, ἔχθεις Ἀτρείδας, 'if, lord, you hate the bitter sons of Atreus…' (510). The audience is reminded of the role the chorus has played in establishing that lie and understands that what follows might be a continuation of its earlier deceitful performance.[56] The fact that the reference to Neoptolemos' hatred of the Atreidai is in the protasis of a condition, however, allows it to be heard in another way also. The statement 'if you hate the sons of Atreus…' may be a suggestion that Neoptolemos, having listened to Philoktetes, might now *actually* hate the Atreidai for what they have done to Philoktetes and that that possible change of heart might form the basis for the action the chorus will now suggest, in keeping with its own genuine pity.

Maintaining this ambiguity, the chorus does not follow the protasis with the expected apodosis stating what Neoptolemos should do, 'if he hates the Atreidai.' Instead in a mild anacolouthon it says what *it* would do, 'if Neoptolemos hates the Atreidai.' With the words ἐγὼ μὲν at the beginning of the apodosis, the audience's attention is drawn to the chorus' state of mind in relation to Neoptolemos' real or fabricated hatred, but what follows defies a secure interpretation of that state of mind. The chorus sings that it would take Philoktetes home. Its words can be heard as a sincere plea to Neoptolemos to forget the deceit and honor the supplication; in this case the unexpected shift to the first person marks the chorus' sincerity. But since the chorus' suggestion is grammatically the apodosis of the condition, it may be offering its advice in keeping with Neoptolemos' deceit, to which the protasis alludes by mentioning Neoptolemos' 'hatred' of the Atreidai. In this case, the ἐγὼ μὲν emphasizes the chorus' collusion with Neoptolemos

[56] Michael Stokes 1988, 157 argues that the condition can only be heard as counterfactual, since it is clear that Neoptolemos' hatred of the Attreidai is fabricated. Therefore, he argues, the only ambiguity in the chorus' words is between the audience's understanding of them and Philoktetes', since he has no reason to disbelieve Neoptolemos' hatred.

and its willingness to use its song to further his deceitful purpose. When the chorus goes on to say that following its advice would turn the κακόν of the Atreidai into a κέρδος, its equivocation continues. It either reminds Neoptolomos of Odysseus' reasoning for deceiving Philoktetes (ὅταν τι δρᾷς εἰς κέρδος, οὐκ ὀκνεῖν πρέπει,'when you do something for gain, it is not fitting to hesitate' 111), or it subverts that reasoning by redefining gain as Philoktetes' emotional wellbeing and Neoptolemos' respectful response to his supplication, rather than victory at Troy. Presumably neither Neoptolemos himself nor the audience at this point can understand which of these mutually contradictory positions the chorus is taking.

And the chorus' song here could not be more carefully constructed to defy interpretation. Is the injunction to take Philoktetes home a sincere appeal on Philoktetes' behalf or a deception designed to help Neoptolemos get him onto the ship?[57] On the one hand this song is, like the strophe, a fabrication of a choral perspective to serve the purpose of persuading Philoktetes falsely that Neoptolemos intends to honor his supplication. In this reading the chorus falsifies its previously genuine pity and refers to the lie in order to signal that the exhortation to pity Philoktetes and take him home is in fact a device to help get him on board the ship. The setting off of the suggestion to take Philoktetes 'home' by the words ἐγὼ μὲν underlines the fact that the chorus, speaking as chorus, deliberately uses its persuasive song to create a fiction. In the other, and equally plausible, reading the chorus is genuinely performing the choral function of supporting the ritual order, by trying to ensure that supplication is honored and by expressing the emotion that that supplication should evoke. In this reading the line, εἰ δὲ πικρούς, ἄναξ, ἔχθεις Ἀτρείδας, recognizes that Neoptolemos might be motivated to simulate a pity the chorus genuinely feels, just as he has fabricated his hatred in order to further his plot. Then the ἐγὼ μὲν is a deliberate distancing from Neoptolemos' point of view and implies a difference between actor's and chorus' perspective.

The final phrase, τὰν θεῶν νέμεσιν ἐκφυγὼν, 'escaping nemesis of the gods,' intensifies the seriousness of our choice in deciding how we interpret the chorus' intent. In the interpretation of the song as a sincere expression of pity, these words signal the chorus' understanding of the

[57] Seale 1982, 34 sees that the intentional ambiguity of the chorus' language in this song bolsters the audience's uncertainty about Neoptolemos.

danger of divine retribution if Philoktetes' supplication is ignored, and he is deceived. If the song itself is interpreted as deceit, even fear of divine retribution is falsified, so that the whole consciousness of a moral and religious order that gives authority to the powerful persuasion of song is drawn into the deceit.

The ambiguity of the antistrophe is subtly underlined by the ambiguity of the exchange between the chorus and Neoptolemos which follows. Neoptolemos warns the chorus that, when the going gets rough with Philoktetes on the ship, it may not remain consistent with its present position: τότ' οὐκέθ' αὑτὸς τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις φανῇς, 'then you no longer appear the same in relation to these words' (521). This somewhat obscure phrasing speaks of the 'sameness' of the chorus in the present and the future with respect to its words. The chorus responds emphatically that there is no possibility of a reproach of inconsistency being made against it: τοῦτ' οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅπως ποτ' εἰς ἐμὲ/ τοὔνειδος ἕξεις ἐνδίκως ὀνειδίσαι, 'there is no way that you will ever justly be able to bring this rebuke against me' (522–3). The confidence it shows is certainly justified if the chorus' position at this moment is completely ambiguous: the chorus cannot be inconsistent with itself if its words have two opposite meanings.

This broken stasimon is crucial to the development of the chorus' role in the play. In the parodos the chorus has offered an interpretation of Philoktetes' life which establishes its independent perspective on the action, although the intermingling of the voices of actor and chorus and the chorus' claim that it serves Neoptolemos' needs raise the question whether that independent perspective will remain free of the deceit which drives the action of the play and shrouds it in moral fog. In the strophe of the 'broken song' the chorus shows itself capable of falsifying its own voice and performance and makes us aware that choral song, like the deceptive acts of Neoptolemos and Odysseus, can be used to create an illusion whose only purpose is to deceive. All choral performance, of course, creates an illusion or evokes a reality not present in the physical world. As we have seen in the *Antigone*, however, the expectation is that that illusion expresses an understanding of, or a set of beliefs about, or authoritative connections to, a felt reality and an authentic vision. So to discover that song can, for example, invoke a god to bear witness to a 'truth' which the chorus knows is false is to undermine our trust in our deepest instinctual reactions to, and feelings about, sacred song.

The ambiguous sincerity of the antistrophe complicates for the audience the question posed by the strophe of how much trust it can place in the chorus' song. It becomes not simply a question of knowing that this chorus is fully implicated in the deceit that drives the plot; rather, the audience is made vividly aware of the impossibility of distinguishing truth from deceit. The result is to draw the role choral song plays—the acts of invocation, supplication, wish, and prayer and the creation of a unique emotional and intellectual context in which to place Philoktetes' suffering—into the same queasy instability of moral and ethical positioning which characterizes all language in the play.

In the rest of the episode the audience's uncertainty about how to interpret what words and gestures mean focuses on Neoptolemos. Neoptolemos agrees to take Philoktetes ὅποι τ' ἐνθένδε βουλοίμεσθα πλεῖν, 'wherever from here we may wish to sail' (529), right after the chorus' antistrophe. The ambiguity of this description of their destination makes it impossible to know what Neoptolemos is thinking at this point; it also maintains the ambiguity of the chorus' position, since it remains unclear how Neoptolemos is reading the chorus' advice in the antistrophe. The arrival of the false messenger, with his story of Odysseus' intent to enveigle Philoktetes back to Troy, allows Neoptolemos to see Philoktetes' reaction to the deception he may have been about to perpetrate himself; caught between the pressures of loyalty to Odysseus and to Philoktetes, he tries to stall for time (639–40) but quickly accedes to Philoktetes' urgency to leave. What he plans as they move off stage we cannot know. His fascination with the bow at the end of the episode is clear, as he and Philoktetes exit not to the ship but into the cave to collect Philoktetes' possessions, but what the bow signifies to him at this point—whether it is the promised victory at Troy or the reciprocal friendship that it symbolizes for Philoktetes—is impossible to say.

3) *The Solo Song*

στρ. α
λόγῳ μὲν ἐξήκουσ', ὄπωπα δ' οὐ μάλα
τὸν πελάταν
λέκτρων ⟨σφετέρων⟩ ποτὲ
κατ' ἄμπυκα δὴ δρομάδ' ⟨Ἄιδου⟩
δέσμιον ὡς ἔλαβεν

ἀντ. α
ἵν' αὐτὸς ἦν, πρόσουρον οὐκ ἔχων βάσιν
οὐδέ τιν' ἐγ-
χώρων, κακογείτονα,
παρ' ᾧ στόνον ἀντίτυπον ⟨νό-
σον⟩ βαρυβρῶτ' ἀποκλαύ-

παγκρατὴς Κρόνου παῖς·
ἄλλον δ' οὔτιν' ἔγωγ' οἶδα κλυὼν
οὐδ' ἐσιδὼν μοίρᾳ
τοῦδ' ἐχθίονι συντυχόντα θνατῶν,
ὃς οὔτε τι ῥέξας τιν', οὔτε νοσφίσας,
ἀλλ' ἴσος ἐν ἴσοις ἀνήρ,
ὤλλυθ' ὧδ' ἀναξίως.
τόδε ⟨μὰν⟩ θαῦμά μ' ἔχει
πῶς ποτε πῶς ποτ' ἀμφιπλήκτων
ῥοθίων μόνος κλύων, πῶς
ἄρα πανδάκρυτον οὕτω
βιοτὰν κατέσχεν·

σειεν αἱματηρόν·
οὐδ' ὃς θερμοτάταν αἱμάδα
κηκιομέναν ἑλκέων
ἐνθήρου ποδὸς ἠπίοισι φύλλοις
κατευνάσειε, ⟨σπασμὸς⟩ εἴ τις ἐμπέσοι,
φορβάδος τι γᾶς ἑλών·
εἷρπε δ' ἄλλοτ' ἀλλ⟨αχ⟩ᾷ
τότ' ἂν εἰλυόμενος,
παῖς ἄτερ ὡς φίλας τιθήνας,
ὅθεν εὐμάρει' ὑπάρχοι
πόρου, ἀνίκ' ἐξανείη
δακέθυμος ἄτα·

στρ.β
οὐ φορβὰν ἱερᾶς γᾶς σπόρον, οὐκ ἄλλων
αἴρων τῶν νεμόμεσθ' ἀνέρες ἀλφησταί
πλὴν ἐξ ὠκυβόλων εἴ ποτε τόξων
πτανοῖς ἰοῖς ἀνύσειε γαστρὶ φορβάν,
ὢ μελέα ψυχά
ὃς μηδ' οἰνοχύτου πώματος ἥσθη
δεκέτει χρόνῳ,
λεύσσων δ'ὅπου γνοίη στατὸν εἰς ὕδωρ
αἰεὶ προσενώμα.

ἀντ. β
νῦν δ' ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν παιδὸς ὑπαντήσας
εὐδαίμων ἀνύσει καὶ μέγας ἐκ κείνων·
ὅς νιν ποντοπόρῳ δούρατι, πλήθει
πολλῶν μηνῶν, πατρίαν ἄγει πρὸς αὐλὰν
Μηλιάδων νυμφᾶν
Σπερχειοῦ τε παρ' ὄχθας, ἵν' ὁ χάλκασπις
ἀνὴρ θεοῖς
πλάθη θεὸς θείῳ πυρὶ παμφαής,
Οἴτας ὑπὲρ ὄχθων.

At this moment, when the theater audience is faced with the impossibility of interpreting Neoptolemos' intention, the chorus performs for the only time without its own audience. Because this song is not sung in the presence of any of the actors, it appears to be the chorus' own response to the situation, without the pressure of either Neoptolemos' or Philoktetes' interests.[58] In both form and content it stands as an anomaly in the play. In this stasimon the chorus takes for granted that Neoptolemos intends to take Philoktetes home, which contradicts both earlier and subsequent songs and ignores the uncertainty, so carefully established in the previous episode, about Neoptolemos' intention. Not only is the perspective expressed here strikingly different, but it is also the only song in the play with an integrated and coherent form. The

[58] As Knox 1964, 130 puts it, the chorus is now "momentarily free of the necessity to sustain the deceit." He believes that the function of the song is to represent the growing pity that Neoptolemos is feeling for Philoktetes off stage. Schmidt 1973, 132, on the other hand, supposes that the song is sung in the hearing of Neoptolemos and Philoktetes and is a continuation of the chorus' effort to build Philoktetes' trust of Neoptolemos, so that he will give him the bow.

stasimon, therefore, poses a serious problem of interpretation: how can the chorus' confident and anomalous perspective in this song be integrated into the rest of the play, including the chorus' own contributions elsewhere?

The song's contrast with the parodos and with the split stasimon is startling. So is the difference between the audience's inability at this moment to interpret what Neoptolemos intends to do and the chorus' confidence and clarity about his intent. The song seems to offer an answer, a coherent perspective from which to view the action. But the chorus' compromised performance before this moment and the thematic emphasis in the previous scenes on the difficulty of defining right action limit the extent to which the audience can trust the song's 'solution,' even when there are no intrusions from the plot to undermine it. Thus, ironically, the song which is most coherent formally and which poses no problems of interpretation internally is the hardest to integrate into the rest of the play. It is unclear how the perspective it voices can or should shape the audience's understanding. Within the context of the play as a whole this moment confirms the failure of choral performance itself to stand alone and effectively create its own reality. The anomaly of the song makes vivid the question of whose vision can be trusted and whose language has the power to deepen understanding or make things happen; it frustrates any possibility of finding an answer to that question in choral performance.[59]

To understand what is at stake in being able to trust the 'sincerity' or persuasive power of the stasimon, we have to understand the perspective it expresses. It elaborates on the two themes of helplessness and isolation that have formed the basis for the chorus' pity in the other songs. This song, however, puts these sources of human suffering in general, and Philoktetes' suffering in particular, in a framework of divine punishment and cure. The rhythm of suffering and release, independent of human action, provides a subject which is particularly enhanced and

[59] This stasimon has excited a great deal of commentary and controversy, particularly in relation to the seeming contradiction between its conclusion, that Neoptolemos plans to take Philoktetes home, and the chorus' earlier knowledge that Neoptolemos in fact intends to take Philoktetes to Troy. The issues and varying opinions of scholars are well-summarized in Tarrant 1986, 121–134. He concludes that the song continues to claim that Neoptolemos plans to take Philoktetes home because the chorus is afraid that Neoptolemos and Philoktetes in the cave may overhear it, but that the larger intent of the song is to give the audience "an opportunity to view the action in a wider perspective" (128).

strengthened by the formal features of choral performance, as we shall see. Here finally the chorus sings a song in which form and content are integrated. As the chorus finds right at the center of the play a fully expressive voice, the audience becomes aware of a response to the situation that has important implications for its judgment about the actions and arguments of the actors. But since this song sounds exactly like songs before and after it that contribute to the uncertain relationship of language, meaning and action, the audience is in a position, by this point in the play, to question the 'truth' and authority of this song as well. Because the chorus has undermined the authority of its own voice, it cannot now unequivocally reflect and make present, as part of the dramatic experience, the rhythm of an order outside of human action.

The choral perspective here even appears to contradict what we know must happen if Helenus' oracle reveals a divine truth. At the end of the play, when Herakles, confirming the oracle, asserts that Philoktetes' presence in Troy is necessary to end the war, and Philoktetes agrees to go, this song remains in our ears as an unanswered question. How does Herakles' 'cure' conform to the picture the chorus gives in this stasimon of the recompense Philoktetes can expect? What credence should we give to this, the most compassionate representation in the play of Philoktetes' plight, in the light of the complete lack of support it seems to get even from the gods themselves? Must we simply dismiss the chorus' vision as delusional? The profound questioning of the power of choral performance that arises from the anomaly of this song in the context of the play as a whole adds immeasurably to the sense that Sophokles is constructing a world in which no human response can maintain its integrity or carry moral authority.

To understand better the dimension of human experience and expression that is compromised by the anomalous position of this song, we must look more closely at its poetry. We must see the ways in which Sophokles carefully establishes continuity between it and previous songs, despite the apparent contradiction in points of view, so that we feel that it is the same language, the same power of expression, which the chorus has used to lie that here it uses to offer a restorative vision. And we must understand the nature of that restorative vision, which the contradiction between this song and the rest of the play calls into question. In this way we can feel the full power of what is lost, or, at least, what we cannot give our uncomplicated assent to.

Formal features of this song evoke the chorus' language earlier in the play and establish continuity between the previous songs and this one, despite their contradictory content.[60] Perhaps the most striking of the features that link this ode to earlier ones is the meter of the opening line of the first strophe and antistrophe. The chorus begins with an iambic trimeter, as it did in the parodos, and again we may imagine that the delivery of this line, spoken or at least not fully sung, reminds us that this chorus' voice, even at the moment when it performs its only independent stasimon, moves into the actors' register in unusual ways.[61] Also as it did in the parodos, the chorus identifies sight and sound as two different sources of understanding and allies itself with sound (λόγῳ μὲν ἐξήκουσ', ὄπωπα δ' οὐ μάλα, 'I have heard it said, but I have not seen…,' 676). The marked alliteration and assonance, which are a distinctive feature of its language in the parodos, can be heard in the repeated ou,long o, and oi sounds of line 680: ἄλλον δ' οὔτιν' ἔγωγ' οἶδα κλυὼν οὐδ' ἐσιδὼν μοίρᾳ; or in a line like: ὃς οὔτε τι ῥέξας τιν' οὔτε νοσφίσας (682), or ὤλλυθ' ὧδ' ἀναξίως (685); and in the echoing of ἀλλ' ἴσος ἐν ἴσοις ἀνήρ (684) and πῶς ποτε πῶς ποτ' ἀμφιπλήκτων/ ῥοθίων μόνος κλύων, πῶς…(687–8). These features cluster in the first stanza to create a strong association for the listener with the previous songs.

The description of Philoktetes' suffering, too, sounds notes which we have heard before from the chorus: the absence of a voice to respond to his own (ἀμφιπλήκτων/ ῥοθίων μόνος κλύων, 'hearing alone the breaking waves…' (687–8)), the helplessness and vulnerability which are a product of the suffering visited upon him by forces outside his control, and the lack of a human community to counteract that vulnerability. The isolation is captured in the image of a child without a nurse: παῖς ἄτερ ὡς φίλας τιθήνας (703).[62] The use of a simile that pictures isolation within a social community to highlight the extremity of Philoktetes'

[60] Because Segal 1995, 100 thinks the chorus is deliberately lying about Neoptolemos' intentions in this stasimon, he sees the sense of divine power, which he believes this song expresses, as "subservient to human guile." This is true elsewhere of the chorus, but I would argue that this is the one moment in the play where its sense of the divine is expressed without guile, in order to create a contrast with the ambiguities and falsehoods of other moments.

[61] Gardiner 1987, 36 also sees this stasimon as consistent in style with the voice of the chorus elsewhere, but she understands that voice as "matter-of-fact," displaying no personal feeling and little poetic effect.

[62] Burton 1980, 236 notes many of these stylistic features and understands the first three stanzas as "a powerful impression of desolation, pain, and ceaseless struggle."

isolation outside it reminds us of the image of the shepherd in the parodos, whose single voice served to illustrate a 'normal' isolation, in contrast to Philoktetes' abnormal state. Here abnormal isolation within a human community expresses the abnormality of Philoktetes' isolation from any community.

While idiom and sound create continuity with the chorus' previous songs, this stasimon also expands and deepens the chorus' previous expression of pity for Philoktetes' suffering by providing a new framework for it; its narration gives his suffering a rhythm that implies order within it. The framework of the song's narrative is established by the mythological paradigm of Ixion at the beginning and the veiled reference to Herakles at the end.[63] These two paradigms evoke two possible models for Philoktetes' suffering: a story without an end (Ixion) or a story where suffering and labor lead to a kind of restoration (Herakles). Ixion's story illustrates never-ending cycles of pain; Herakles' is a story with a beginning, middle and end that form a contained whole, as the end restores Herakles to the place he held in the beginning, although in the middle his position is reversed. The chorus' song describes a pattern or rhythm, not the specifics of a particular story: it is the image of the rotating wheel[64] we are given by the chorus, not Ixion's name. The song gives shape to the monotonous bleakness of Philoktetes' fate; in so doing, the chorus' aim is to allow Philoktetes' story to conform to one of these mythological patterns, making it a part of an order that gives it form and meaning.

The chorus uses the unnamed Ixion[65] as the opening paradigm to illustrate the extremity of Philoktetes' suffering and to suggest one

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Tarrant 1986, 126–7 points out verbal echoes between the final antistrophe and the parodos.

[63] Davies 2001, 53–58 comments on the importance of the framing myths of Ixion and Herakles. He sees the myths as directing our attention backward and forward in the play, Ixion to Philoktetes' physical suffering and Herakles to the end of the play. He concludes that "in the ultimate resort Heracles will win out over Ixion…"

[64] The use of the word ἄμπυξ to evoke the rim of the wheel to which Ixion is bound is striking. The word is normally used of a headband or part of a horse's headgear. This is the only use of the word to name a wheel's rim. This description of Ixion's punishment, as well as the description of Herakles' apotheosis (θεοῖς/ πλάθει πᾶσιν θείῳ πυρὶ παμφαὴς, 727–8), seems "homely" and understated, as if to make them possible paradigms for Philoktetes' all too down-to-earth situation. Note also the use of the verb πελάζω in both descriptions to allow a connection with Philoktetes' situation through the image of movement.

[65] This assumes that the manuscripts' reading, τὸν πελάταν λέκτρων ποτὲ Διὸς Ἰξίονα κατ' ἄμπυκα δὴ…, has been correctly emended by the omission of Διὸς Ἰξίονα.

possible outcome of that suffering. We may suppose that Ixion is suggested to the chorus as an appropriate model by two features of his story. He is identified in the song by the phrase τὸν πελάταν λέκτρων ⟨σφετέρων⟩, 'the one who approached [Zeus'] bed;' Philoktetes' suffering was also caused by his approaching a prohibited and sacred space.[66] Ixion encroached on Zeus' bed, Philoktetes on Chryse's sanctuary (1326–7: σὺ γὰρ νοσεῖς τόδ' ἄλγος ἐκ θείας τύχης,/ Χρύσης πελασθεὶς φύλακος…, 'for you are sickened by this pain from divine chance, when you approached Chryse's guard…'). For both men the encroachment resulted in a form of painful movement, although in Ixion's case the movement is the unending circular motion of the wheel, while for Philoktetes it is halting, limited steps.

This thread of movement which joins Ixion's and Philoktetes' stories takes on a particular resonance when we imagine the chorus' dance as an integral part of the performance (and meaning) of this song. Both Ixion, eternally, and Philoktetes, for the moment perhaps, have been catapulted outside the normal rhythms of human life, and the chorus pictures their extraordinary fate through their movement. At the same time, the chorus' dance refers to an order that humans can only know through artistic representations, which make some sense of the apparent randomness of its presence in our lives. As the chorus sings of the physical movement that symbolizes Ixion's and Philoktetes' suffering, it represents the order which both causes and makes sense of that suffering through the choreographed movement of its dance.

The use of Ixion as a paradigm is revealing of the chorus' particular perspective in yet another way. While Ixion's never ending rotations provide a possible paradigm for the way Philoktetes' story could be told if the wound never heals and he must forever limp his way around the island, there is also an aspect of Ixion's story that makes it singularly inappropriate in this context. The song itself draws attention to the fact that Ixion earned his suffering by his intentional action, while Philoktetes, as the chorus sings, οὔτε τι ῥέξας τιν' οὔτε νοσφίσας/ ἀλλ' ἴσος ἐν ἴσοις ἀνήρ,/ ὤλλυθ' ὧδ' ἀναξίως, 'though he has not done anything to anyone nor taken anything away, but is an equal among equals, yet thus, without warrant, he is being destroyed' (682–5).[67]

[66] I am accepting the suggestion of Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990, 195 for the emendation of this line.

[67] See Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990, 195–7 for a discussion of the emendations made in this version of the text and Willink 2003, 86–7, for alternative suggestions.

Philoktetes has intended no wrong, nor has he deliberately crossed the boundary between mortal and immortal; he is ἴσος ἐν ἴσοις.[68] From the perspective of responsible action, this difference makes the chorus' comparison deeply problematic. But for the chorus human intention as it is manifested in actions and their results, plays no part in the rhythm its song and dance illustrate. Although the chorus describes Philoktetes' suffering as a fate he falls in with (μοίρᾳ…συντυχόντα, 680–1), not as the result of his own choices, his encounter with fate is in essence no different from Ixion's being seized by Zeus and bound κατ' ἄμπυκα δὴ δρομάδ'. That Ixion intentionally violated Zeus' bed, while Philoktetes stumbled blindly into Chryse's *temenos*, is irrelevant. What concerns the chorus is the perception of a pattern and rhythm that make understandable, or at least expressible, the suffering each experiences as a consequence.

Other features of the chorus' description of human suffering in the first antistrophe and second strophe enhance the sense that the chorus' particular perspective on Philoctetes' fate arises out of its understanding of rhythm. Philoktetes' state is described in negative terms, in a catalogue of what he lacks: 691, <u>οὐκ</u> ἔχων; 696, <u>οὐδ'</u> ὃς; 703, παῖς <u>ἄτερ</u> φίλας τιθήνας; 707, <u>οὐ</u> φορβὰν…<u>οὐκ</u> ἄλλων/ αἴρων τῶν νεμόμεσθ'…; 714, ὃς <u>μηδ'</u> οἰνοχύτου πώματος ἥσθη. The choice to describe Philoktetes' suffering as a kind of absence confirms the chorus' sensitivity to his isolation and helplessness, but the lack of companionship in tending the consuming disease and the absence of cultivated food and drink imply a further deprivation, that of the normal rhythms of human life. The rhythms which are missing from Philoktetes' life are present in the language and structure of the song in a number of ways: by the norm of statement and response assumed in the phrase στόνον ἀντίτυπον (693); by the alternation of activity and rest evoked by the verb κατευνάσειε (699); by the pattern of sowing and reaping suggested by νεμόμεσθ' ἀνέρες ἀλφησταί (709); and by the evocation of the ceremony of communal eating in the phrase οἰνοχύτου πώματος (715).

Rhythm also informs the description of Philoktetes' disease. The chorus evokes a 'normal' rhythm to pain that Philoktetes' experience lacks because of his isolation: the onset of pain (693–5), the flowing of blood (696–7), the easing of pain (699–700), and the return to

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[68] I understand this phrase as Burton 1980, 236 does in his paraphrase "a man like other men."

easy movement (704–5). This norm is contrasted with the aimlessness and disorientation which Philoktetes' loneliness necessitates: εἷρπε δ' ἄλλοτ' ἀλλ⟨αχ⟩ᾷ/ τότ' ἄν εἰλυόμενος, 'he crept along sometimes here, sometimes there, crawling along' (701–02). The absence of an ordered structure in Philoktetes' experience is echoed in the final strophe, which describes his lack of cultivated food and drink. Once again the song implies a structure, a normal rhythm, by the ordering of its description: the stanza falls into two parts, food and drink. In each part the description of the normal situation is followed by a description of Philoktetes' condition: a predictable and calculated food supply contrasts with Philoktetes' occasional and chance shooting of birds; wine flowing at a feast, with Philoktetes' dependence on standing pools of water. In between the two parts, the phrase ὦ μελέα ψυχά, 'miserable soul,' (712) evokes the misery of Philoktetes' life, cut off from these normal rhythms.

The chorus' formulation of Philoktetes' suffering as a lack of rhythm is due in part to the way in which rhythm structures its own movement and speech. The movement of the dance and the rhythm of song allow the chorus to demonstrate visually and aurally the sense of order which it sees as the norm and which Philoktetes is excluded from. The order of its dance, however, reaches beyond the evocation of the normal rhythms of a human life to bring before us a larger order which can transform the seeming disorientation in Philoktetes' suffering. The larger order is evoked not only by the movements of the dance but by the framing myths of Ixion and Herakles which, as we have seen, present two different possibilities for how Philoktetes' story might be structured: either the pattern of never-ending, repetitive cycles of divinely imposed suffering or a single cycle of suffering and restitution.

The final antistrophe, which some critics have seen as disconnected from the rest of the song, in fact completes its careful structure and makes clear what kind of order the chorus imagines Philoktetes' story will demonstrate.[69] By singing in the final antistrophe of Philoktetes' restoration to his home the chorus finishes its song where it began, picturing Philoktetes as ἴσος ἐν ἴσοις and restoring him to his proper community. By this ending the chorus makes Philoktetes' story conform to a rhythm and pattern which make sense of his aimless, lonely suf-

[69] See Tarrant 1986, 126–7 for a persuasive analysis of the connection of the final antistrophe to the rest of the song.

fering. The audience is given the experience of a perspective which, to the extent that it has credibility, deepens and complicates the way the play as a whole presents the nature of the 'cure' which might be available to Philoktetes.

While the final stanza gives this song of Philoktetes' suffering a coherent form, it introduces the problem of inconsistency with the rest of the play that we have noted. Critics have tried in various ways to explain the disparity between the chorus' assertion here that Neoptolemos intends to take Philoktetes home and its earlier support of the plot to take Philoktetes to Troy. The two most frequently cited solutions are either to abandon the notion of choral consistency altogether or to posit the sudden return of Neoptolemos and Philoktetes to the stage as the motivation for what the chorus sings in the final stanza. In this reading the chorus sings of Philoktetes' return home only in order to deceive him about Neoptolemos' real intentions at the moment he reemerges from the cave.[70] Proponents of the latter solution point to the way in which the final antistrophe is disconnected grammatically from the previous three stanzas, which form a single syntactic unit; they argue that the grammatical break signals the dramatic intrusion of the actors onto the stage.[71] Neither of these suggestions seems to me a satisfactory solution for the striking incongruity of this song. The former group's solution seems to be the product of despair: the apparent lack of coherence in the chorus' point of view can only be explained by assuming an uncharacteristic lack of concern with coherence on Sophokles' part. A lack of consistency is certainly part of this chorus' presence in the play, but rather than deny that consistency matters to Sophokles, we should attempt to understand what he hopes to establish through its lack. While the other suggestion—the sudden arrival of Neoptolemos and Philoktetes—is certainly a possible explanation and would further illustrate the way in which the intrusion of the actors affects the nature of the chorus' song, it seems dramatically clumsy. If the chorus were using its song in the final stanza to continue the deceit of Philoktetes, one would, at the very least, expect some response by Neoptolemos to back up its attempt. Instead there is no response from

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[70] Gardiner 1987, 32–36 has a careful summary of these two possibilities. She feels that the most likely solution is to imagine Philoktetes and Neoptolemos reentering onto the stage before the final stanza.

[71] Schmidt 1977, 133 argues for the unity of the ode but then reads the whole ode as part of the plot to get Philoktetes on board the ship.

either actor to what they have just heard, if in fact they have reentered the stage before the end of the song. We must presume that the chorus' effort is completely wasted on Philoktetes, who is distracted by the onset of his attack. If the chorus' lie has no apparent effect, why bother to introduce it?

In my understanding the final strophe belongs integrally to the rest of the song and to the context of that song: the freedom of expression that the chorus uniquely has here, in the absence of the actors. The fact that the stanza is disconnected from the previous one grammatically and starts a new sentence is entirely appropriate to the song's move from a description of disordered suffering to a description of the answering restitution for that suffering. This shift is signaled by the first words of the final antistrophe: νῦν δ' (719).[72] The chorus turns from the past to the present to provide an ending to the story that satisfies its sense of the order of things: Philoktetes' isolation will end, and he will be returned to his home, which alone can provide the community which he so clearly lacks. Herakles, to whom Philoktetes is bound by *philia*, is at the heart of that community. It is fitting that his story, not Ixion's, provide the narrative pattern for Philoktetes' future, as the chorus tells it in the last stanza of the song. It also points, of course, to the surprising appearance of Herakles at the end of the play.

For the chorus the inconsistency between the ending it imagines here and the plot to take Philoktetes to Troy, in which it has previously participated, is irrelevant, since, in performing this stasimon, it is not concerned with how the ending it sings of will be brought about. What matters is the integrity and structure of the song, which reflects the order of how things are; the relationship of this vision to what is taking place in the moment is not its concern. A striking feature of its language reveals the chorus' lack of interest at this moment in the specific actions necessary to bring about the end it imagines: the absence throughout the song of the use of proper names to identify the 'actors' in the story. Ixion is ὁ πελάτας λέκτρων (677–8); Philoktetes

[72] Burton 1980, 236 claims that the νῦν δέ "cancels the effect of the earlier part of the song as the chorus look forward with certainty to a complete reversal in Philoctetes' fortunes." The words shift the focus of the song, but it is hard to see how they cancel the *effect* of the earlier lines. νῦν δέ signals a temporal shift in Philoctetes' state, but the force of that shift depends on the continuing effect of the picture of Philoktetes' past suffering. Davies 2001, 57 sees the turn in the final stanza as an example of Sophocles' "much-loved device of an ode of false optimism," although he admits that in this case the optimism is, in the end, warranted.

is first referred to as τοῦδ' (681) and then simply in the third person; Neoptolemos is παῖς ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν (719); and Herakles is ὁ χάλκασπις ἀνήρ (726). The absence of names[73] removes the story from a grounding in the immediate circumstances (and the plot connected to those circumstances); it generalizes it, making clear that the individual agents and what they do are subordinate to the pattern they illustrate. Just as the chorus does not give the name of the agent whose action allowed Herakles to regain his divine position (ὁ χάλκασπις ἀνὴρ θεοῖς/ πλάθη θεὸς θείῳ πυρὶ παμφαής, 'the bronze-shielded man approached the gods as a god shining with divine fire,' (726–8), so it shows no concern for the difficult moral and political decisions which particular people must make to bring about Philoktetes' restitution. It is enough to assert that the meeting between Philoktetes and the 'son of a noble man' will result in his once again being blessed and great. The authority for this ending comes from an understanding not of the actions to be taken to bring it about but of the larger order that makes it necessary.

Despite the chorus' disengagement from the immediate plot here and the apparent inconsistency with its previous (and subsequent) attitude, there are two ambiguities in the final strophe which actually allow this song to accommodate rather than contradict both the immediate events of the play and the return of Philoktetes to Troy, not to Oeta, with which the play ends. Most important of these ambiguities is the phrase πλήθει/ πολλῶν μηνῶν, 'in the fullness of many months,' (721–2), which places the restoration of Philoktetes to his home within a broad temporal framework. The period implied by the phrase can be understood in two different ways. One reading understands it to refer to the future and the period of time (and events in that time) it may take before the predicted end happens. The phrase allows for a delay, while Philoktetes goes to Troy and Troy is conquered, before he returns to Oeta. Odysseus' plot and Neoptolemos' determination to take Philoktetes to Troy—the events of the play—may all reach completion in the 'fullness of many months,' after which—in the larger scheme of things—Philoktetes' return to Oeta gives his story the proper shape.[74] In

[73] Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990, 195 comment that mythical figures often go unnamed in tragic choral lyric, citing Davies 1988. However, in this song it is not just mythological figures but all the people in the song who go unnamed.

[74] Tarrant 1986, 130 comments: "As the pair set off for Troy, the words of the stasimon are in a real sense brought to pass, since their journey will bring Philoctetes, in the fullness of time, back to Oeta."

the other reading the words refer to the past, to the years of suffering for which Philoktetes' return home is recompense.[75] The trip to Troy, if that is what Neoptolemos still intends, merely extends the suffering for which Philoktetes will eventually be compensated—another labor to be added to the list. At the same time this reading allows for the possibility that the chorus expects Neoptolemos to change his mind and take Philoktetes home immediately. Both readings eliminate the contradiction between this song and the action of the play, while making clear that the decisions and actions which the actors struggle to take the chorus can relegate, in the context of this song, to a single phrase which tenuously grounds the song in the flow of historical time.

The second ambiguity is the uncertainty of the antecedents for the pronouns ὅς and νιν in line 721: ὅς νιν ποντοπόρῳ δούρατι, πλήθει/ πολλῶν μηνῶν, πατρίαν ἄγει πρὸς αὐλὰν/ Μηλιάδων νυμφᾶν, 'he brings him in the seafaring ship, in the fullness of many months, to his house, in his father's land, the land of the nymphs of Malis.' The pronouns refer back to the mention of Neoptolemos and Philoktetes in the earlier part of the sentence, but it is impossible to determine which pronoun refers to which of the two men. Does the chorus say that Neoptolemos (ὅς) will take Philoktetes (νιν) to Oeta, or that Philoktetes (ὅς) will take Neoptolemos (νιν) there? The latter reading would conform to the 'first' ending of the play, prior to Herakles' entrance:[76] Philoktetes' stubborn insistence forces Neoptolemos to agree to return immediately to Oeta, rather than go to Troy; with this reading the πλήθει πολλῶν μηνῶν refers to the past. The former reading can accommodate Neoptolemos' plan to take Philoktetes to Troy as the necessary first step to Philoktetes' returning home, cured and in triumph, at the end of the war, πλήθει πολλῶν μηνῶν. These ambiguities allow the chorus' version of Philoktetes' story in this stasimon, which seems so contradictory to the movement of the plot, to accommodate the action's immediate goal of taking Philoktetes to Troy. At the same time the chorus is pointedly unconcerned with the nature—the timing, motivation, and morality—of the action necessary to actualize its vision, as it draws a picture which satisfies its own perception of a pattern of suffering and recompense. This lack of concern is vividly represented in the multiple interpretations which its language allows and the problem of

[75] Webster 1970, 114, and Jebb 1890, 118.
[76] For the two endings of the play, see Hoppin 1990.

inconsistency the song as a whole poses for anyone who tries to bring it in line with the action.

On one level the chorus, singing this song in absolute disregard for the plot and how it has participated in it prior to this point, follows the dictates of its own perspective, which is not grounded in a sequence of events in time or involved in the considerations required to make such events happen. This perspective ties it firmly to traditional choral concerns and creates a reality which is an alternative to the actors' understanding of what is necessary to bring about the desired end. Its logic is based in part on its freedom to react without any immediate responsibility for what happens and in part on an understanding of man's place in the scheme of things. This perspective allows the chorus both to feel pity for Philoktetes' suffering and to envision an ending which gives that suffering meaning, at least in as much as it provides it with a kind of structure.

How then can the vision expressed in this stasimon be incorporated in the audience's understanding of what happens in the course of the play? In the action prior to Herakles' appearance the chorus' vision of a 'cure' seems beyond reach. Not only does the chorus itself abandon this perspective for the rest of the play but, when Neoptolemos seemingly does agree to take Philoktetes home, as the chorus here predicts he will, his action cannot be seen as a fulfillment of the chorus' vision of recompense for his present suffering in this song, since Philoktetes will take home the endless suffering of his wound, which can only be cured at Troy, and will be engaged in a bitter struggle with the Greek army, when it returns in defeat from Troy to exact vengeance from Philoktetes and Neoptolemos. In terms of what the human resources can achieve before the appearance of Herakles, the chorus' perspective at this moment remains anomalous, contradictory, and out of place.

In the 'second' ending of the play, Sophokles gives the return to Troy authority through the appearance of Herakles himself, who has provided the chorus with its paradigm of suffering and restitution.[77] Herakles confirms that his story of suffering and reward is a paradigm for Philoktetes': καὶ πρῶτα μέν σοι τὰς ἐμὰς λέξω τύχας,/ ὅσους πονήσας καὶ διεξελθὼν πόνους/ ἀθάνατον ἀρετὴν ἔσχον, 'first I will tell to you my own fortunes, how many labors I toiled over and, when I had lived through them, achieved immortal *arete*, as you can see,' (1418–20). His

[77] Hoppin 1990, 154–55; 171–3.

assertion that Philoktetes is to go to Troy is not the end of Philoktetes' story—as Odysseus and Neoptolemos think—but a necessary step to the end the chorus has promised: his return home. (σκῦλά τ' ἐς μέλαθρα σὰ/ πέμψεις, ἀριστεῖ' ἐκλαβὼν στρατεύματος,/ Ποίαντι πατρὶ πρὸς πάτρας Οἴτης πλάκα, 'you will send booty to your home, taking your prize from the army, to Poias your father and to the land of Oeta,' 1428–30).[78] Herakles thus offers the means by which the chorus' 'cure' (or something like it) can be brought in line with the action that both Odysseus and Neoptolemos have attempted, but failed, to bury about in the course of the play.

However, the abrupt and unexpected arrival of the god to bring about this end seems merely to underline the failure of the actors and chorus to understand or achieve it. Human resources are limited throughout the play by loyalties, passions, and ambitions that cannot shape a workable future, and by the uneasy relationship of language to reality. The limits are evident in the tricky and morally questionable manipulation which Odysseus is forced to use, since he cannot act and speak directly; in the crippling and uncompromising anger which gives Philoktetes' language the only fluency he has, but which condemns him to unbearable suffering and isolation; and in the opacity of Neoptolemos' thinking and the fact that his only significant independent decision takes place off stage and without any articulation to make it available to our understanding. The chorus is also limited in its ability to make a convincing reality out of the pattern it sees in Philoktetes' story by the inconsistent and fragmentary articulation of that vision in its song and dance. It takes Herakles' divine presence to compensate for these human limitations.[79]

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[78] The return of Philoktetes himself to Malis is not absolutely asserted by Herakles' words, only that the spoils, the manifestation of his victory at Troy, will reach home. This uncertainty opens up a whole other question, about what kind of return home is proper compensation for Philoktetes' suffering.

[79] Segal 1995, 116–117 understands that Herakles' appearance is necessary because of the inadequacy of the human responses: "Neoptolemus' 'goodwill' (eunoia), however, is not in itself sufficient to reverse the dominance of death over life in this debased world. For that, some larger assurance of the power of life is needed, the conviction that the victory of meanness and the 'death' of heroic values form only a moment in a larger pattern. Heracles' 'immortal arete' (1420) and the piety that 'does not perish whether men live or die' are the final statement of that assurance." He believes the effect of Herakles' appearance is to make the divine order "a little (but only a little) less inscrutable and remote than in the earlier plays." This reading gives the play an optimism that the dramatic tone of miscommunication, unmitigated suffering, anger and cynicism seem to work against. Heracles' appearance at the end seems to me

The inconsistency of the chorus' voice marks the limit of its capacity to make its vision an effective part of the drama. The stasimon we have just discussed, in marked contrast to the split stasimon which precedes it, demonstrates song's power to express a vision of how things are which is outside time, outside the consequences of human action, and which assures us of a comprehensible order which gives meaning and shape to events. This vision represents a powerful possibility of a 'cure' for Philoktetes which does not depend on the understanding and subsequent choices of the actors. However, the chorus whose song makes the possibility present at this moment has undermined song's power to bring such a vision to bear upon the world of the play, by the cynical manipulation of its own performance to represent a false reality and by the inconsistency of its position vis-à-vis the action. We must, therefore, entertain the possibility that this song too may be a deceitful vision.[80] Its evocation of a coherent order which makes sense of Philoktetes' suffering as part of a universal rhythm could be heard as a demonstration of the disjunction between language's, and particularly song's, expressive power and its grounding in a meaningful and coherent moral, ethical, or religious understanding of what should and must be. The chorus thus becomes a means for Sophokles to expand

to lay emphasis on the unavailablity of human resources which can imagine and articulate an understanding of what must happen and the remoteness of the divine order from the human world, since Herakles' appearance provides a resolution which opposes absolutely the conclusion any of the actors has struggled to arrive at. I am much more in sympathy with Winnington-Ingram's statement at the end of his chapter on the *Philoktetes* (1980, 303): "No two assumptions have more persistently bedevilled the interpretation of Sophocles than these: (i) that the values for which his heroes stand, detroying themselves and others, are, simply and necessarily, right in the eyes of the poet; and (ii) that the will of the gods is not only just but also benevolent and must be seen to be so. The pietists and the 'hero-worshippers' are equally below the measure of the poet's tragic vision, which owes its character both to the limitations of the heroes, and to the conditions which the gods impose upon them." The tension between actors' and chorus' perspectives is one way that Sophokles has of showing the heroes', or I would argue the actors', limitations and of revealing the "conditions which the gods impose," and similarly exposing the limitations' of the chorus' vision within the context of how human beings shape their existence in this world. In this play the chorus' perspective is more than usually inadequate, adding to the pessimism I see in both the humans' failure to find a cure and the need for Herakles' abrupt reversal of the play's direction, which ultimately symbolizes the inaccessibility of the divine order to human understanding.

[80] Kamerbeek 1980, 109, for instance, argues that this stasimon "remains, as a whole, within the framework of the fraud" without accepting the reappearance of Neoptolemos and Philoktetes to motivate the fraud.

his exploration of the interplay of truth and illusion and the role which language plays in the confusion of the two.[81]

4) *A Hymn to Healing Sleep?*

στρ. α
῞Υπν' ὀδύνας ἀδαής, ῞Υπνε δ' ἀλγέων
εὐαὴς ἡμῖν ἔλθοις, εὐαίων
εὐαίων, ὦναξ· ὄμμασι δ' ἀντίσχοις
τάνδ' αἴγλαν, ἃ τέταται τανῦν,
ἴθι ἴθι μοι, Παιών.
ὦ τέκνον, ὅρα ποῦ στάσῃ,
ποῖ δὲ βάσῃ,
πῶς δέ σοι τἀντεῦθεν
φροντίδος. ὁρᾷς ἤδη.
πρὸς τί μένομεν πράσσειν;
καιρός τοι πάντων γνώμαν ἴσχων
⟨πολύ τι⟩ πολὺ παρὰ πόδα κράτος ἄρνυται.

ἀντ. α
ἀλλά, τέκνον, τάδε μὲν θεὸς ὄψεται·
ὧν δ' ἂν κἀμείβῃ μ' αὖθις, βαιάν, μοι
βαιάν, ὦ τέκνον, πέμπε λόγων φήμαν·
ὡς πάντων ἐν νόσῳ εὐδρακὴς
ὕπνος ἄυπνος λεύσσειν.
ἀλλ' ὅ τι δύνᾳ μάκιστον,
κεῖνο ⟨δή⟩ μοι
κεῖνό ⟨μοι⟩ λαθραίως
ἐξιδοῦ ὅπως πράξεις.
οἶσθα γὰρ ὃν αὐδῶμαι·
εἰ ταὐτᾷ τούτῳ γνώμαν ἴσχεις
μάλα τοι ἄπορα πυκινοῖς ἐνιδεῖν πάθη.

ΝΕΟ. ἀλλ' ὅδε μὲν κλύει οὐδέν, ἐγὼ δ' ὁρῶ οὕνεκα θήραν
τήνδ' ἁλίως ἔχομεν τόξων, δίχα τοῦδε πλέοντες.
τοῦδε γὰρ ὁ στέφανος, τοῦτον θεὸς εἶπε κομίζειν.
κομπεῖν δ' ἔργ' ἀτελῆ σὺν ψεύδεσιν αἰσχρὸν ὄνειδος.

ἐπ.
οὖρος τοι, τέκνον, οὖρος· ἁ-
νὴρ δ' ἀνόμματος, οὐδ' ἔχων ἀρωγάν,
ἐκτέταται νύχιος—
ἀδεὴς ὕπνος ἐσθλός—
οὐ χερός, οὐ ποδός, οὔτινος ἄρχων,
ἀλλά τις ὡς Ἀίδᾳ πάρα κείμενος.
ὅρα, βλέπ' εἰ καίρια
φθέγγῃ· τὸ δ' ἁλώσιμον
ἐμᾷ φροντίδι, παῖ, πόνος
ὁ μὴ φοβῶν κράτιστος.

[81] Falkner 1998 understands the questioning of language's moral power in the play as part of a strategy by Sophocles to separate theater's use of language to "deceive" from the ethically suspect rhetorical strategies of a character like Odysseus, whose deceptions represent "a corrupt form of sophistry." He sees in Philoktetes the model for a kind of compassionate "reading" that restores to theatrical "deception" its ethical power. For Sophokles' exploration of the terrible power of language to deceive, and theater's ambiguous relationship to that power, see also my article on *Elektra* (Kitzinger 1991).

If the previous song causes us to question the value of the cure song can provide, by taking us outside of time and historical circumstance, the next song explores vividly the efficacy of the chorus' song as a 'cure' in the moment. Choruses regularly display the power they believe their performances have to affect the moment through appeals to the gods, prayers, invocations, hymns, paeans, wishes, and so on. In performing such songs the chorus takes for granted that song brings a restorative power through the movements and sounds which, like ritual, transform a particular moment into a timeless appeal to divine power. At the same time a performance is very much grounded in human time, in the sequence of gestures and sounds that constitute the performance in the moment. In this stasimon the power of song in the moment of its performance is beautifully illustrated by the invocation to Sleep as an immediate cure for Philoktetes' suffering. But, in the middle of the first strophe, it becomes an exhortation to Neoptolemos to act in the moment, while Philoktetes is gripped by sleep.[82] Although there is no break in the form of the stanza, and the song works formally as a coherent whole, the two cures it proposes are contradictory and disjointed. Any action that Neoptolemos could take as a consequence of Philoktetes' sleep can only hurt Philoktetes and turn sleep into a calamity, not a cure. Because the song starts with such a clear evocation of a traditional choral form, its internal incoherence of sense again seems to challenge the integrity and function of choral song itself. In addition, by turning its song in mid-note into an attempt to bring about Neoptolemos' action, as its paean has successfully brought about sleep, the chorus reveals the gap between its own performance and the kind of action Neoptolemos must perform.

The incongruity of song and action is most obviously signaled by the fact that the action the chorus appears to urge on Neoptolemos contradicts its own vision of Philoktetes' future in the previous stasimon and by the fact that Neoptolemos systematically refuses to respond to its exhortation. The one hundred lines of dialogue between this song and the previous one have brought before our eyes and ears the intensity of Philoktetes' suffering and pain, the very suffering for which the previous song imagined a cure by ignoring the immediate circumstances of the action. Now, as Neoptolemos stands with the bow in his hand beside the sleeping Philoktetes, the chorus enters fully into the moment and

[82] Winnington-Ingram 1980, 287 calls the shift "one of the harshest discords one could find in Greek poetry."

urges immediate action, without specifying what that action might be. The only thing that Neoptolemos could do under the circumstances is to take the bow and run. Such an action would not only make impossible Philoktetes' restitution as the chorus has pictured it in the previous song but would itself be entirely ineffective, as Neoptolemos, who has come to understand the oracle more fully, immediately sees.

How can we make sense of this song, whose substance is inconsistent with the song the chorus has sung only one hundred lines previously and which is immediately dismissed by Neoptolemos as pointless and wrong-headed? If we look only at its content we have to conclude that Sophokles has no interest in creating a consistent or meaningful stance for his chorus but is using it differently at different moments, depending on dramatic necessity; here, for examle, the chorus' insistence that Neoptolemos act is dramatically useful by revealing Neoptolemos' doubt about how to.[83] But if we take the view that Sophokles may be exploring the very nature of choral performance and its effectiveness in the world of this play, we can see how these songs might work together and how this song in particular adds to that exploration. In the previous song the chorus imagines a particular outcome, the cure of Philoktetes' return to his homeland, as part of a larger pattern; it shows no concern for the immediate circumstances or the way in which such an action might be brought about and its cost. Now, however, the song focuses on the moment created by circumstance as the context for action, much as its own odes occur in moments that interrupt and are isolated from the sequence of the plot; while the particular action Neoptolemos is to take remains unspecified, the chorus imagines that this particular interval of time afforded by Philoktetes' sleep might resolve the situation, without regard to past or future. If the previous song was outside time, this song is created by the moment and shaped by the chorus' sense of its own performance in the moment.

Both songs demonstrate a striking lack of concern for defining the actions themselves. As we saw in the previous song, the 'how' and 'when' of restoring Philoktetes to his home is irrelevant to the pattern of suffering and restitution the song predicts. Here the attempt to transform the moment into a cure for Neoptolemos' dilemma completely ignores

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[83] Schmidt 1977, 155, for example, argues that the chorus here recalls Odysseus' attitude towards Philoktetes and his suffering, so that Neoptolemos' decision is made in the context of Odysseus' point of view.

the nature of the action that will produce that cure, as is clear from the fact that the chorus urges Neoptolemos to act, without saying what it is he should do. The songs together demonstrate two complementary aspects of choral performance. Song and dance by their very nature are of the moment, intensifying our experience of it and detaching it from a before and an after,[84] but they are also out of the moment, as they gain authority from the repetition of a mimetic act which represents an order not determined by choice and consequence. While the two songs bring into focus these two aspects of choral performance, they also contradict each other in the cure they propose, and they sit in an uneasy relationship to the movement of the plot. Thus it is choral performance itself that seems out of place, ineffective and misguided. Instead of allowing the chorus' different understanding of time to give the audience an alternative perspective on the action, Sophokles allows the play's action to question the integrity and power of the chorus' voice. Its performance is caught in the same futility of cross-purpose and miscommunication which characterizes the actors' attempt to move the plot forward.

The chorus is not merely performing as an actor at this point, as many have argued.[85] Its call to action may constitute an attempt to affect the plot, but the mode of its expression—and its understanding of what constitutes action—are entirely different from those of the actors. As at earlier moments, the chorus sings with its own recognizable voice and uses a lyric form.[86] Its song has distinct poetic features, like assonance and repetition, which characterize its earlier songs, and its dance movement makes language and body movement synchronous modes of expression, while the actors in contrast use language to determine and explain what they are about to do. Its voice contrasts with the voice of Neoptolemos who interrupts the chorus' song with four lines

[84] This feature of song is brought out by the frequent assumption that the chorus' song is there to heighten emotion. I would simply argue that heightened emotion, though often an effect of a song, is rarely its sole or even main purpose.

[85] See, for example, Burton 1980, 240 for an explanation of the purpose of this song which he describes as a "lyric system" rather than a stasimon, because of the presence of Neoptolemos' hexameter lines: "Sophocles accordingly brings his actor into the lyric system in order to emphasize the participation of the chorus in a critical situation on the stage: an opportunity for action has been created by the hero's falling asleep, and the moment is seized by the sailors to press home the point upon an already reluctant and worried Neoptolemus."

[86] For the form of this ode as a paian and its possible connection to a cult of Ὕπνος see Haldane 1963, 53–56.

of dactylic hexameters.[87] As we shall see, the contrast extends beyond the form of expression to a different understanding of the nature of action itself.

Most evident of the formal features of song here are repetition and echoing which are not only suited to a kletic hymn to Sleep but are characteristic of the chorus' style in its other songs. We need only consider the opening lines of the first strophe to hear the heavy repetition in: Ὕπν' ὀδύνας ἀδαής, Ὕπνε δ' ἀλγέων/ εὐαὴς ἡμῖν ἔλθοις, εὐαίων,/ εὐαίων, ὦναξ (828–30) or we might notice the alliteration and assonance of the last line of the strophe: ⟨πολύ τι⟩ πολὺ παρὰ πόδα κράτος ἄρνυται (838). In addition, the meter, with its distinctive long closes at the end of each colon, is an important and striking element in creating the tone of the song,[88] so that the tone of the words is dependent on a musical rather than rhetorical feature. The effectiveness of the song depends on its formal features, and our understanding of the chorus' motive in singing it must take the mode of expression into account rather than simply treating the chorus as another, not very effective, actor.[89]

Formal elements give the song unity despite the abrupt shift in focus in the first strophe from the address to sleep to the address to Neoptolemos. The formal unity lends coherence to the otherwise disruptive contradiction between the invocation of Sleep as a cure for Philoktetes and the call for an action which would destroy him.[90] The unity is cre-

[87] I regard Neoptolemos' hexameter lines in response to the strophe as having the effect of interrupting the song rather than integrating the chorus' and actor's voices. For one thing, the content of Neoptolemos' hexameters opposes the chorus, and the metrical differences also signal a different mode of delivery. The opening word of Neoptolemos' hexameters is ἀλλά (839), expressing an objection to the chorus' point of view and may imply an unexpected interruption in the chorus' song. The chorus then picks up the song again with the same word (ἀλλά, τέκνον, 843) to reassert its point of view.

[88] See Dale 1968, 117–8, for an analysis of the meter as particularly fitting to the address to Sleep.

[89] As Burton 1980, 241 puts it: "The strophe (827–38) is remarkable for the perfection of its rhythm and language in the opening address to Sleep. Sophocles has here exploited the utmost possibilities of euphonious sound by the use of long vowels and diphthongs in echoed sequence…"

[90] This contradiction could be resolved by interpreting the tone of the initial address to Sleep as cynical. Segal 1995, 107 implies this cynical reading when he says "the chorus invokes the god Sleep to aid the cruel plot." It runs counter to the tone of the opening lines, which even Segal agrees are "gentle," and which Jebb 1890, 135 characterizes as "breath[ing] the very spirit of rest," to imagine that they could be heard as cynically manipulative by the audience. The ethical datives ἡμῖν (829) and μοι (832) are common in kletic hymns, as Burton 1980, 241 points out, and do not imply a cynical self-interest in the invocation. Reinhardt 1979, 181 calls the whole song "a song of

ated not only by the meter, repetition, and alliteration mentioned above but also by diction, in particular the repeated references throughout the song to eyes and the act of seeing: 830–1: ὄμμασι δ' ἀντίσχοις/ τάνδ' αἴγλαν, 'may you sustain on his eyes this glow…'; 833: ὅρα ποῦ στάσῃ, 'look to your situation'; 835: ὁρᾷς ἤδη, 'you see now'; 843: τάδε μὲν θεὸς ὄψεται, 'the god will look to these things'; 847–8 ὡς πάντων ἐν νόσῳ εὐδρακὴς/ ὕπνος ἄυπνος λεύσσειν, 'how perceptive of all things in illness/ is unsleeping sleep in its watchfulness'; 851: ἐξίδου ὅπως πράξεις, 'see how you will act'; 854: μάλα ποι ἄπορα πυκινοῖς ἐνιδεῖν πάθη, 'for the shrewd there are indeed many difficulties to see'. The curing ray which sleep lays on Philoktetes' eyes and the watchfulness of sleeping eyes in sickness are connected by this language to the need for Neoptolemos to 'see' what he must do; the consistent use of the language of vision weaves the two parts of the song together and leads us to believe that what the chorus 'sees' through its song as cures for Philoktetes and for Neoptolemos create a coherent whole. In fact, however, the cures offered to Philoktetes and Neoptolemos are not only contradictory but also limited in their effectiveness. Just as Philoktetes' temporary sleep can provide no permanent escape from the harm of the wound, so the action in the moment that the chorus urges on Neoptolemos cannot begin to address the complex issues that surround the question of what he should do. The fact that it is impossible to tell what action the chorus urges Neoptolemos to perform testifies to the limits Sophokles has set on the chorus' ability to address what is involved in effective action.[91]

Just as the chorus avoided naming any of the actors in the previous song, so here it does not say what Neoptolemos should 'see.' For example, at line 836, it sings πρὸς τί μένομεν πράσσειν; 'why are we waiting to act?' Since the verb πράσσειν has no object, the content of the action is unspecified. In the antistrophe, the verb πράσσω does have an object: ἀλλ' ὅ τι δύνᾳ μάκιστον,/ κεῖνο ⟨δή⟩ μοι,/ κεῖνο ⟨μοι⟩

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gentle enticement to deceit, all the more forceful for its gentleness." He understands the purpose of the song as persuasion of Neoptolemos and does not, therefore, see a split focus between concern for Philoktetes and for Neoptolemos.

[91] Linforth 1956,127 points out that the chorus is not specific about the action it is imagining, although he uses the lack of specificity to defend the chorus against a charge of cruelty towards Philoktetes. Most other critics speak of the ode as if it articulates specifically the plan to take the bow while Philoktetes is asleep. However, Stokes 1988, 161–62 makes the suggestion that the chorus might be proposing that Neoptolemos take the sleeping body of Philoktetes with him.

λαθραίως/ ἐξιδοῦ ὅπως πράξεις., 'the farthest (greatest) thing you can, that, that consider how you will do in secret...' (848–51). Yet one could not say for sure what the pronoun κεῖνο, which is the object of πράσσειν, refers to. Nor does the relative clause ὅ τι δύνᾳ μάκιστον, which modifies κεῖνο, throw light on the question.[92] Indeed the use of the descriptive word μάκιστον here seems to be motivated by the fact that a few lines above the chorus uses its opposite, βαιός (to describe the speech it wishes to hear from Neoptolemos (844–5)). The thought seems to be that, just as speech should be βαιός, so action should be μάκιστος. Such linguistic play may give the song balance and a kind of formal coherence, but it does not represent a considered opinion about what action would best serve Neoptolemos' purpose. Rather the chorus' understanding and purpose are governed by the nature of its own performance. Sensitivity to the power of the moment of performance in its own ritual context leads it to urge action in the moment of Philoktetes' sleep, and it is the structure of poetic language—the oppositions, repetitions, echoes, and rhythms—which gives the chorus a way of pointing to that action as an urgent necessity without taking account of the moral and ethical decisions which must shape and define it.

The language the chorus uses to represent the action without specifying it is again evident in the final lines of the antistrophe: οἶσθα γὰρ ὃν αὐδῶμαι./ εἰ ταὐτᾶ τούτῳ γνώμαν ἴσχεις/ μάλα τοι ἄπορα πυκινοῖς ἐνιδεῖν πάθη (in the reading of the OCT), 'For you know of whom I speak. If you are thinking the same way as this man, there are many difficulties for the clever to contemplate.' (853–4). There are almost as many interpretations of the possible referents for the pronouns in these lines as there are variant readings for them.[93] No matter how one

[92] Most editors understand ὅτι δυνᾷ μάκιστον adverbially. So, for example, Webster 1970, 122 translates "Search as far as possible in what way you will carry out secretly that actual suggestion of mine..." Kamerbeek 1980,123 allows for the way I am understanding the phrase here: "the clause can also be an anticipating relative clause, taken up by κεῖνο."

[93] Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990, 200–01 defend the reading, εἰ ταὐτᾷ τούτῳ γνώμαν ἴσχεις, with τούτῳ refering to Odysseus and ταὐτᾷ refering to Neoptolemos' alliance with Odysseus in general. Kamerbeek 1980, 124 reads εἰ ταύταν τούτῳ γνώμαν ἴσχεις, with τούτῳ refering to Philoktetes and ταύταν...γνώμαν refering to the opinion Neoptolemos expresses in the hexameters. Webster 1970,122 thinks, with Jebb, that τούτῳ must refer to Odysseus but that we should then read ταύταν γνώμαν, to refer to Neoptolemos' plan to defy Odysseus' plan altogether, whereas Jebb 1890, 139 reads ταύταν γνώμαν as a reference to Neoptolemos' plan to take Philoktetes with him to

reads the text, however, the obscurity of reference remains and, it is reasonable to assume, is intended. We cannot be sure whom the chorus is naming, what plan it suggests Neoptolemos might be entertaining, and what the ἄπορα πάθη of that plan might be. We miss the point if we assume a particular formulation for action as the chorus' intent rather than a representation of the power of the moment. The song leaves the definition of the action up to Neoptolemos but conveys the καιρός of the moment by the sounds and rhythms of its song. In these last two lines of the antistrophe, for example, where the meaning is obscure at best, the idea of the weight, brevity, and intensity of the moment is fully apparent in the juxtaposition of the nine long syllables of εἰ ταὐτᾷ τούτῳ γνώμαν ἴσχεις with a run of eight shorts in the next line: μάλα τοι ἄπορα πυκινοῖς. At the same time the sequence of long vowel sounds αυ-ου-ῳ-ω-α-ι-ει, with the incisive 't's' and 's's' contrasts with the short alphas and omicrons and the liquid m's, l's. r's, n's, and labial p's of the next line to capture the combination of determination and feeling made manifest in the moment of action. In its own context—in the prayers, hymns, and mythological paradigms its performance enacts—the chorus has a deep understanding of the possibility for this kind of intense use of the moment, and it is this possibility it wishes to convey to Neoptolemos.

The chorus is not advising Neoptolemos on a particular action, as Odysseus has done in great detail, but is rather creating an intense sense of the καιρός (837) in which Neoptolemos might act. Its sense of the καιρός is as far removed from the requirements of effective action as is its understanding of Philoktetes' suffering and restitution in the previous song. Song and dance can intensify the power of the moment, can seem to make the moment stand still so that Neoptolemos can 'see' it for what it is, yet in doing this the chorus reveals the limit of its own vision in imagining what significant action in that moment might entail.

To explore that limit we must return to the division, in the strophe and antistrophe, between the evocation of Philoktetes' sleep and the call to Neoptolemos to act. We have seen that these two focal points, which are woven together smoothly by the song's formal features, are

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Troy instead of just the bow. Willink 2003, 92 emends the line to say: εἰ δ' αὖ τὰν τούτου γνώμαν ἴσχεις, with τούτου referring to Philoktetes. All these readings, and the corruption of the text itself, point to Sophokles' having originally composed the text to allow ambiguity.

deeply at odds (unless we read the chorus' song as gratuitously cynical about the healing power of Philoktetes' sleep), since Neoptolemos' act will not heal but harm Philoktetes. Why, if it is not out of deceit and cynicism, does the chorus tolerate this contradiction? When Neoptolemos responds to the chorus' first call to action by saying that the oracle, as he now understands it, requires him to take both Philoktetes and the bow to Troy, the chorus responds, in the antistrophe, with a μέν…δέ…construction which balances and opposes divine responsibility for the working out of the oracle and Neoptolemos' need to act.[94] While Neoptolemos is struggling with his growing understanding of the consequences of his actions, the chorus tries to separate what the oracle demands from what Neoptolemos could do right now: ἀλλά, τέκνον, τάδε μὲν θεὸς ὄψεται·/ ὧν δ' ἂν κἀμείβῃ μ' αὖθις…, 'but, child, the god will see to this; what you have to say to me in response…' (843–4). By separating the realm of the oracle and the realm of the action, it creates two different times—future and present—and makes the actor responsible for the latter and the gods responsible for the former. It represents action as existing in the moment, without connection to a sequence of cause and effect or to the need to consider a code of behaviour or the demands of reputation. It wishes by its song to create the illusion that the possibility of the moment is absolute in itself (like the moment of the performance of a ritual) and, at the same time, part of a larger order, for which the actor, working in the moment, is not responsible. Thus the moment, isolated as it is by the chorus' song, can serve both as a healing cure for Philoktetes and as an opportunity for action for Neoptolemos.

The epode intensifies the chorus' attempt to turn the possibility of the present moment into something which could, in and of itself, change the outcome of the action.[95] In many ways it returns us to the opening strophe. The repetition of οὖρος in the first line recalls the repetition of

[94] I do not agree with Kitto 1956, 120 that the chorus' suggestion that the gods will take care of the working out of the oracle, is "a vulgar error." After all, Herakles' intervention at the end of the play, in the most basic ways, confirms the chorus' claim here.

[95] The epode departs from the iambo-dochmiac rhythms of the first two stanzas. Scott 1996, 185 sees the final stanza as "less contrived and more reflective of [the chorus'] thoughts," which are, in his opinion, centered on the vulnerability of Philoktetes and the desire that the action Neoptolemos takes cause the "least amount of distress" to Philoktetes. It is hard to see how any actions that Neoptolemos could take other than to wait for Philoktetes to wake up and then to take him back to Oeta would cause anything but the utmost distress to Philoktetes. I agree that the epode reflects

ὕπνε in the first line of the song: οὖρος τοι, τέκνον, οὖρος, 'a favorable wind, indeed child, a favorable wind,' echoing Ὕπν' ὀδύνας ἀδαής, Ὕπνε… 'Sleep unknowing of pain, Sleep…'; ἀνόμματος (856) echoes ὄμμασι (830), and ἐκτέταται (857), τέταται (831). Although the rhythms are quite different, these echoes seem to return the song to its initial purpose, an evocation and representation of the momentary state of sleep, which creates an opportunity for immediate action. But there is a subtle shift in the representation both of the sleep that has come to Philoktetes and of the opportunity it represents for Neoptolemos. What was earlier described as καιρός (837) has become an οὖρος, a favorable wind, and Philoktetes' sleep is now pictured as death-like: ἀλλά τις ὡς Ἀίδᾳ πάρα κείμενος, 'like someone laid out here for Death' (861). By the use of metaphor and simile the moment is given the illusion of a greater permanence; the fragile moment of sleep takes on the absoluteness of death, and what was before the neutral opportunity for action that sleep makes possible becomes a positive force in the natural world pushing the action forward. In both of these images the presence of divine will is implied, making the action taken in the moment part of a larger context beyond human choice.

But this picture is clearly an illusion, dependent on the chorus' careful use of imagistic language. The limit inherent in the representation is apparent once again in the ambiguity of the chorus' description of the action to be taken in this moment. In the final lines of the song, it sings: τὸ δ' ἁλώσιμον/ ἐμᾷ φροντίδι, παῖ, πόνος/ ὁ μὴ φοβῶν κράτιστος, 'As far as I can understand, child, the effort which does not cause fear is best' (862–4). Emphasizing that its understanding is the product of its own thought, the chorus claims that the most effective action is ὁ μὴ φοβῶν. This phrase can be understood in three different ways: Is the act to be a fearless one because, as Odysseus wishes, it would disregard the dangers of going against the will of the gods and against heroic nature? or is it to be fearless in disobeying Odysseus' wishes and the army's expectations? or is it to avoid causing fear in Philoktetes by doing what he wishes, or by leaving him peacefully (for the moment) asleep? The personification of the act gives it presence and apparent substance; we are persuaded that the chorus can 'see' this fearless act.

an intensification of the chorus' point of view, but not that that intensification has to do with its consciousness of Philoktetes' vulnerability.

But its vision tolerates an ambiguity which the actual decision to act must resolve.

The imagistic language creates the illusion of a possibility that doesn't exist for Neoptolemos. The chorus' vision of what can be achieved in this moment comes from its understanding of what its own song achieves in the moment of its singing. Much like the sleep which the chorus vividly characterizes, song can alter consciousness and give us a different way of seeing. But just as Philoktetes' sleep is the product not only of song but also of his own physical experience (he knows from past experience that it will follow his painful attack: λαμβάνει γὰρ οὖν/ ὕπνος μ', ὅταν περ τὸ κακὸν ἐξίῃ τόδε, 'Sleep then takes me, when this evil departs,' 766–7), the action that Neoptolemos must take is not a product solely of the moment of performance. To be an agent and to produce a cure Neoptolemos must place his action in a context of time, space, and history. And just as the play demonstrates the limit of his ability to do this, by allowing him finally to reach a decision which contradicts the oracle but also is reversed by Herakles, so the chorus' attempt to produce an action reveals a limit to song's effective transformation of the moment. The limit is apparent in the absence of a concrete definition of the action it wishes Neoptolemos to take, in the song's internal contradiction, and in Neoptolemos' refusal to be moved by the chorus' exhortation.

5) *The Kommos: (dis)embodied voices*

στρ. α
ΦΙΛ. ὦ κοίλας πέτρας γύαλον
θερμὸν καὶ παγετῶδες, ὥς
σ' οὐκ ἔμελλον ἄρ', ὦ τάλας,
λείψειν οὐδέποτ', ἀλλά μοι
καὶ θνῄσκοντι συνείσῃ.
ὤμοι μοί μοι.
ὦ πληρέστατον αὔλιον
λύπας τᾶς ἀπ' ἐμοῦ τάλαν,
τίπτ' αὖ μοι τὸ κατ' ἦμαρ ἔσται;
τοῦ ποτε τεύξομαι
σιτονόμου μέλεος πόθεν ἐλπίδος;
ἴθ' αἱ πρόσθ' ἄνω
πτωκάδες ὀξυτόνου διὰ πωεύματος·
ἅλωσιν οὐκέτ' ἴσχω.
ΧΟ. σύ τοι κατηξίωσας, ὦ βαρύποτμε, κοὐκ
ἄλλοθεν ἁ τύχα ἅδ' ἀπὸ μείζονος·
εὖτέ γε παρὸν φρονῆσαι
λωίονος δαίμονος εἵλου τὸ κάκιον αἰνεῖν.

ἀντ. α
ΦΙΛ. ὢ τλάμων τλάμων ἄρ' ἐγὼ
καὶ μόχθῳ λωβατός, ὃς ἤ-
δη μετ' οὐδενὸς ὕστερον
ἀνδρῶν εἰσοπίσω τάλας
ναίων ἐνθάδ' ὀλοῦμαι,
αἰαῖ, αἰαῖ,
οὐ φορβὰν ἔτι προσφέρων,
οὐ πτανῶν ἀπ' ἐμῶν ὅπλων
κραταιαῖς μετὰ χερσὶν ἴσχων·
ἀλλά μοι ἄσκοπα
κρυπτά τ' ἔπη δολερᾶς ὑπέδυ φρενός·
ἰδοίμαν δέ νιν,
τὸν τάδε μησάμενον, τὸν ἴσον χρόνον
ἐμὰς λαχόντ' ἀνίας.
ΧΟ. πότμος σε δαιμόνων τάδ', οὐδὲ σέ γε δόλος
ἔσχ' ὑπὸ χειρὸς ἐμᾶς· στυγερὰν ἔχε
δύσποτμον ἀρὰν ἐπ' ἄλλοις.
καὶ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τοῦτο μέλει, μὴ φιλότητ' ἀπώσῃ.

στρ β.
ΦΙΛ. οἴμοι μοι, καί που πολιᾶς
πόντου θινὸς ἐφήμενος,
γελᾷ μου, χερὶ πάλλων
τὰν ἐμὰν μελέου τροφάν,
τὰν οὐδείς ποτ' ἐβάστασεν.
ὦ τόξον φίλον, ὦ φίλων
χειρῶν ἐκβεβιασμένον,
ἦ που ἐλεινὸν ὁρᾷς, φρένας εἴ τινας
ἔχεις, τὸν Ἡράκλειον
ἄθλιον ὧδέ σοι
οὐκέτι χρησόμενον τὸ μεθύστερον
ἀλλ' ἐν μεταλλαγᾷ ⟨χεροῖν⟩
πολυμηχάνου ἀνδρὸς ἐρέσσῃ,
ὁρῶν μὲν αἰσχρὰς ἀπάτας,
στυγνόν τε φῶτ' ἐχθοδοπόν,
μυρί' ἀπ' αἰσχρῶν ἀνατέλ-
λονθ' ὃς ἐφ' ἡμῖν κάκ' ἐμήσατ' ἔργων.
ΧΟ. ἀνδρός τοι τὸ μὲν ὂν δίκαιον εἰπεῖν
εἰπόντος δὲ μὴ φθονερὰν
ἐξῶσαι γλώσσας ὀδύναν.
κεῖνος δ' εἷς ἀπὸ πολλῶν
ταχθεὶς τοῦδ' ἐφημοσύνᾳ
κοινὰν ἤνυσεν ἐς φίλους ἀρωγάν.

ἀντ. β
ὦ πταναὶ θῆραι χαροπῶν τ'
ἔθνη θηρῶν, οὓς ὅδ' ἔχει
χῶρος οὐρεσιβώτας,
φυγᾷ μηκέτ' ἀπ' αὐλίων
ἐλᾶτ'· οὐ γὰρ ἔχω χεροῖν
τὰν πρόσθεν βελέων ἀλκάν,
ὢ δύστανος ἐγὼ τανῦν.
ἀλλ' ἀνέδην— ὅδε χωλὸς ἐρύκομαι,
οὐκέτι φοβητὸς ὑμῖν—
ἕρπετε, νῦν καλὸν
ἀντίφονον κορέσαι στόμα πρὸς χάριν
ἐμᾶς ⟨γε⟩ σαρκὸς αἰόλας.
ἀπὸ γὰρ βίον αὐτίκα λείψω·
πόθεν γὰρ ἔσται βιότα;
τίς ὧδ' ἐν αὔραις τρέφεται
μηκέτι μηδενὸς κρατύ-
νων ὅσα πέμπει βιόδωρος αἶα;
ΧΟ. πρὸς θεῶν, εἴ τι σέβῃ ξένον, πέλασσον,
εὐνοίᾳ πάσᾳ πελάταν
ἀλλὰ γνῶθ', εὖ γνῶθ'· ἐπὶ σοὶ
κῆρα τάνδ' ἀποφεύγειν.
οἰκτρὰ γὰρ βόσκειν, ἀδαὴς δ'
ὀχεῖν μυρίον ἄχθος ᾧ ξυνοικεῖ.

ἐπ.
ΦΙΛ. πάλιν πάλιν παλαιὸν ἄλ-
γημ' ὑπέμνησας, ὦ
λῷστε τῶν πρὶν ἐντόπων.
τί μ' ὤλεσας; τί μ' εἴργασαι;
ΧΟ. τί τοῦτ' ἔλεξας; ΦΙΛ. εἰ σὺ τὰν ἐμοὶ
στυγερὰν Τρῳάδα γᾶν μ' ἤλπισας ἄξειν.
ΧΟ. τόδε γὰρ νοῶ κράτιστον.
ΦΙΛ. ἀπό νύν με λείπετ' ἤδη.
ΧΟ. φίλα μοι, φίλα ταῦτα παρήγγει-
λας ἑκόντι τε πράσσειν.
ἴωμεν, ἴωμεν
ναὸς ἵν' ἡμῖν τέτακται.
ΦΙΛ. μή, πρὸς ἀραίου Διός, ἔλ-
θῃς, ἱκετεύω. ΧΟ. μετρίαζ'.
ΦΙΛ. ὦ ξένοι,
μείνατε, πρὸς θεῶν. ΧΟ. τί θροεῖς;
ΦΙΛ. αἰαῖ, αἰαῖ,
δαίμων, δαίμων· ἀπόλωλ' ὁ τάλας·
ὦ πούς, πούς, τί σ' ἔτ' ἐν βίῳ
τεύξω τῷ μετόπιν, τάλας;
ὦ ξένοι, ἔλθετ' ἐπήλυδες αὖθις.

ΧΟ. τί ῥέξοντες; ἀλλόκοτος
γνώμα τῶν πάρος ἂν προφαίνεις.
ΦΙΛ. οὔτοι νεμεσητὸν
ἀλύοντα χειμερίῳ
λύπᾳ καὶ παρὰ νοῦν θροεῖν.
ΧΟ. βᾶθί νυν, ὦ τάλαν, ὥς σε κελεύομεν.
ΦΙΛ. οὐδέποτ' οὐδέποτ', ἴσθι τόδ ἔμπεδον,
οὐδ' εἰ πυρφόρος ἀστεροπητὴς
βροντᾶς αὐγαῖς μ' εἶσι φλογίζων.
ἐρρέτω Ἴλιον, οἵ θ' ὑπ' ἐκείνῳ
πάντες ὅσοι τόδ' ἔτλασαν ἐμοῦ ποδὸς
ἄρθρον ἀπῶσαι.
ὦ ξένοι, ἕν γέ μοι εὖχος ὀρέξατε.
ΧΟ. ποῖον ἐρεῖς τόδ' ἔπος; ΦΙΛ. ξίφος, εἴ ποθεν,
ἢ γένυν, ἢ βελέων τι, προπέμψατε.
ΧΟ. ὡς τίνα ⟨δὴ⟩ ῥέξῃς παλάμαν ποτέ;
ΦΙΛ. κρᾶτα καὶ ἄρθρ' ἀπὸ πάντα τέμω χερί.
φονᾷ φονᾷ νόος ἤδη
ΧΟ. τί ποτε; ΦΙΛ. ἐς Ἅιδου.
οὐ γὰρ ἐστ' ἐν φάει γ' ἔτι.
ὦ πόλις πόλις πατρία,

cont'd next page

πῶς ἂν εἰσίδοιμι σ' ἄθλιός γ' ἀνήρ,
ὅς γε σὰν λιπὼν ἱερὰν
λιβάδ' ἔβαν ἐχθροῖς Δαναοῖς
ἀρωγός; ἔτ' οὐδέν εἰμί.[96]

The paian to Sleep fails to connect to the movement of the action because of its isolation of the moment in the moment. Neoptolemos cannot take advantage of the opportunity the chorus points to because he understands that effective action cannot be isolated from what has gone before and what is yet to come. The final choral contribution in the play, the kommos it sings with Philoktetes, is, circumstantially, a reversal of the situation we have just examined and a return to the beginning of the play. Instead of the chorus' taking the initiative to urge Neoptolemos to act immediately, abandoning Philoktetes, here Neoptolemos instructs the chorus to wait for Philoktetes, in case *he* chooses to act by agreeing to sail to Troy. The possibility, in the paean to sleep, that the chorus might initiate action by the power of its song gives way to its subordination to the actors' decisions, and, as at the beginning of the play, the justification for the chorus' presence comes not from its own authority but from Neoptolemos' orders. Yet Neoptolemos makes clear that the exchange between Philoktetes and the chorus has the potential to change the direction in which the plot is moving, if the chorus can persuade Philoktetes to change his mind. Since the audience fully expects Philoktetes to sail to Troy by the end of the play, the potential of this moment and of the role the chorus might play in it is powerfully present, and the fact that the chorus has no effect on Philoktetes even more striking.[97]

The chorus' ineffectiveness in its final contribution dramatizes the incoherence of its voice in the world of the play.[98] But as we shall see, it also ties the chorus firmly to the larger failure of persuasive language to bring about what Helenus' oracle has declared will happen. In the

[96] I have accepted the changes Willink 2003, 94–5 makes to the Oxford Text in the last four lines of the epode.

[97] Burton 1980, 244 thinks that the sole purpose of the kommos is to allow the audience to hear Philoktetes express his pain: "Philoctetes' desolation must be given heightened expression from his own lips in lyric form so that there may be no interruption in the crescendo of emotion."

[98] The kommos has provided further evidence for some critics' belief that Sophokles has no interest in creating a consistent voice for the chorus. See, for example, Kamerbeek's comment, 1980, 154 on the widely accepted addition of πότμος in line 1116 and the inconsistency it creates with 1095–7.

structure of the last movement of the play the kommos is the first of a series of three attempts to persuade Philoktetes without guile to come to Troy: first the chorus', then Neoptolemos' and finally Herakles'. In this series the chorus' attempt fails most completely, since, until the very end of their exchange, Philoktetes pays no attention at all to the chorus' words. Neoptolemos also fails, although Philoktetes acknowledges the force of his argument. It is not until Herakles appears as a *deus ex machina* that Philoktetes changes his mind. Although these exchanges progress from failure to success, the arguments used by the chorus, Neoptolemos, and Herakles are essentially the same: each tries to show Philoktetes that it is within his power to choose to go to Troy and that it is what divine will and friendship demand. If it is not the nature of the argument that finally succeeds in bringing about the necessary end, it must be the authority—in a sense that will have to be explored—of the speaker that makes the difference in the persuasiveness of the language. The appearance of Herakles makes clear that no human in the play combines an understanding of what must be with the ability to articulate that understanding persuasively enough to make it happen.

What finally does the kommos add to our understanding of why the chorus' language cannot carry authority? We shall see that Sophokles intensifies the failure of the chorus in the kommos by undermining the relationship between its verbal and physical presence.[99] The authority which a chorus normally has by virtue of the integrated whole which its song and the physical movement of its dance make is challenged

[99] There is wide disagreement among critics about the sincerity of the chorus in this kommos. Gardiner 1987, 44, for example, sees its complete inability to communicate with Philoktetes as evidence of its character: "the expedient, the timeservers, the followers," while Winnington-Ingram 1980, 294 denies that the chorus is hypocritical but calls its attitude a "combination of weak pity and strong self-interest." What seems to me much clearer than the question of its character here is the fact of its abandonment of any expression of pity for Philoktetes and the open claim to be speaking for Neoptolemos. Winnington-Ingram's argument that the chorus' attitude is consistent throughout the play seems to me to ignore the continual play with its independence and the striking dimunition of its presence at the end of the play, starting in this kommos where the chorus is "standing in" for the actor not only physically but also in the nature of its arguments. The chorus may be present for the rest of the play after this kommos, but it is absolutely silent. Its silent presence is a powerful image of a voice which has no position from which to speak. Gardiner, ibid., remarks on the silent presence of the chorus at the end of the play but views that presence as marking a distinction between "the honorable and the politic, the leaders and the followers, the understanding and the incomprehending." I do not find a black-and-white distinction being drawn between chorus and actors but a reflection of the variety of ways in which all human participants in the drama are limited in their understanding.

by the chorus' shifting representation of how its physical presence is to be understood. Moreover, it constantly changes its sense of Philoktetes' physical circumstances and their bearing on its argument.[100]

A disjunction between the chorus' physical presence and the language it uses opens the kommos, when the chorus claims that it speaks for Neoptolemos and not itself, after Philoktetes has appealed to it in terms which are particularly relevant to the chorus' characteristic concerns (1070–1): ἦ καὶ πρὸς ὑμῶν ὧδ' ἐρῆμος, ὦ ξένοι,/ λειφθήσομαι δὴ κοὐκ ἐποικτιρεῖτέ με;, 'So, by you thus abandoned, strangers, I will be left and you will not pity me?' He points to his isolation, should the chorus leave, and asks for its pity. This appeal is in keeping with the position the chorus has articulated at times in the play and with which its presence is associated. But in response the chorus represents itself as a mouthpiece for Neoptolemos, so that its words are not the produce of its physical presence but emanate from the absent Neoptolemos: ὅδ' ἐστὶν ἡμῶν ναυκράτωρ ὁ παῖς. ὅσ' ἂν/ οὗτος λέγῃ σοι, ταῦτά σοι χἠμεῖς φαμεν. 'This child is our captain. Whatever *he* says to you, *this* we also say to you.' (1072–3). The subordination of its voice to its commander might be appropriate, if the chorus had not, in the course of the play, created an independent identity for itself, to which Philoktetes here explicitly appeals. As we have seen, it has established, however fragmentarily, its own voice in keeping with its role as performers of choral lyric and, with that voice, has articulated its pity for the very isolation which Philoktetes here evokes. It cannot, therefore, be seen only as a group entirely dependent on Neoptolemos for its point of view, as it claims with these words it is.

Here we have the first indication of why the chorus fails to persuade Philoktetes. It tries to divorce its argument from its own physical reality and borrow the authority of an absent other. Philoktetes' deafness to the chorus in the kommos merely reinforces the insubstantiality it has created for itself. The appearance of Herakles at the end of the play is a dramatic representation of the kind of embodiment necessary to make language persuasive. In an ironic reversal of the human situation in the play, where physical presence often represents various kinds of absence (and *vice versa*), the god suddently becomes visible, creating

[100] If we had the choreography of the kommos, we might see even more clearly the insecure significance of the chorus' physical presence and the disembodiment of its argument. The relationship of movement to language would, I imagine, complete the experience of the final hollowness of the chorus' voice.

finally an unambiguous presence, where voice and appearance confirm each other's signification. Only in his presence can Philoktetes hear the arguments necessary to change his mind. The *deus ex machina* underlines the absence of human resources within the world of the play to produce authoritative speech that will bring about the necessary cure.[101] In the course of the kommos the chorus' own physical presence is so emptied of significance that Philoktetes finally sees it only as the means by which he might end his life. Its sole purpose for being on stage during the kommos has been to save Philoktetes and, through him, the Greek cause. By the end we also see the chorus through Philoktetes' eyes as a symbolic instrument, never to be used, of his final alienation from the Greeks. For the rest of the play the chorus is silent.

The chorus' virtual fading away stands in contrast to Philoktetes' self-consistency and intransigence. In the next scene Odysseus comes on stage for the last time, uselessly chasing after Neoptolemos to try to persuade him not to return the bow to Philoktetes. The contrast between Odysseus and Neoptolemos echoes structurally the opposition of the chorus' insubstantiality and Philoktetes' unrelenting self-consistency. The chorus and Odysseus are the first to disappear from the action, partly because their roles in the drama have had the least legitimacy, in that neither their physical nor their verbal presence can achieve an autonomous position that affects the perspectives from which we can view the action. It is instructive to trace the movement of the chorus' position in the kommos to understand how thoroughly Sophokles eradicates its independent perspective, which has tantalized and confused us throughout the play. That erasure is signaled initially by the claim the chorus makes that it is present only to speak for Neoptolemos. It

[101] The use and meaning of the *deus ex machina* has been extensively discussed. For a summary of the different attitudes and a sensible reading of the various aspects of the epiphany, see Blundell 1989, 220–225. The reading which I find most interesting and which touches on the epiphany as an indication of the failure of the actors' language is Pietro Pucci's analysis, (1994, esp. 34–41). He stresses the tension between the epic cast to Herakles' language and appearance and the tragic medium in which the rest of the characters function, as well as between the ambiguous language of the oracle and Herakles' explicit statements. His summary of the effect of the epiphany coincides with my reading of it as a compensation for the failure of all forms of human language in the play: "The foreign [epic] character of the epiphany may suggest that in Sophocles' writing this explicit metaphysical language does not penetrate the world, does not compound with its language—as the language of the oracle does—but remains an alien language. (44)" For discussion of the possible relevance of hero cults to Herakles' appearance, see Harrison 1989, 173–5 and Schein 2001, 45–47.

remains to be seen how Sophokles develops this idea of the disconcerting vacuity of its physical and verbal presence.

The first approach the chorus uses with Philoktetes emphasizes the degree to which he is responsible for his inevitable death if he is left alone on the island without his bow. It wants to convince Philoktetes that he has the capacity to choose a different end, but it negates its own argument by using words which imply his impotence, when it sings of his agency:

> σύ τοι σύ τοι κατηξίωσας, ὦ βαρύποτμε, κοὐκ
> ἄλλοθεν ἁ τύχα ἅδ' ἀπὸ μείζονος·
> εὖτέ γε παρὸν φρονῆσαι
> λῴονος ἐκ δαίμονος εἵλου τὸ κάκιον αἰνεῖν. (1095–1100)

> You, you indeed determined this, heavy-fated one, and not
> from elsewhere, someone greater, did this fortune come;
> when it was possible to be sensible, starting with a better fate,
> you chose to acquiesce in a worse one.

The first and most striking juxtaposition is the verb κατηξίωσας and the vocative βαρύποτμ[ε]. While κατηξίωσας states that Philoktetes' own judgment is the source of his despair, βαρύποτμε names him by his 'destiny', as if Philoktetes is only the fate he has suffered. The chorus repeats this conflation of Philoktetes with his destiny in the next words οὐκ ἄλλοθεν ἁ τύχα ἅδ'. While trying to say that Philoktetes, and no one else, is the source of what is happening to him, the chorus, with the word τύχα, names an element of causation—chance—which cannot have Philoktetes as its source. While all it may mean by τύχα is 'what is happening to you,' the word evokes causation outside of Philoktetes' control, especially as Philoktetes' own agency in the sentence is represented by a negation of any other source (οὐκ ἄλλοθεν) and not a denotation of his own person. A similar contradiction exists in the juxtaposition of δαίμονος and εἵλου in the next line, but the corruption of the text makes it difficult to be sure of its nature and extent. Since the chorus cannot make the argument for Philoktetes' agency without using language which points to the forces outside his control, and using it in such a way that Philoktetes is identified as much as a victim as an agent, it is no surprise that Philoktetes is unaffected, even deaf to, the argument that he can choose to come to Troy.

In the chorus' next lines it responds to Philoktetes' railing against the plot which deprived him of his bow with the simple statement: πότμος σε δαιμόνων τάδ', οὐδὲ σέ γε δόλος/ ἔσχ' ὑπὸ χειρὸς ἐμᾶς, 'Fate from

the gods, not a trick of mine took hold of you.' (1116–7). Once again one is struck by the disconnectedness of the chorus' argument. Most obviously, it now reverses the claim it has just tried to make for Philoktetes' agency, by attributing Philoktetes' dilemma to πότμος δαιμόνων. As Kamerbeek remarks, citing also Campbell, in connection with the emendation of a second πότμος in the line, "there is a difficulty, viz. the inconsistency with 1095–7."[102] Perhaps more significant, however, is the chorus' denial in these lines of the part the central action of the play has played in bringing Philoktetes to this point. No audience member can easily accept the chorus' flat denial that the *dolos* has contributed to Philoktetes' loss of the bow. What have we been watching all this time? Since the chorus has been so implicated in the action, its words here cannot make the argument for the insignificance of the human plot without disassociating itself from its own physical presence on stage and the role it has played.

In this connection the use of the pronoun ἐμᾶς in the phrase ὑπὸ χειρὸς ἐμᾶς is particularly interesting. Philoktetes has wished to see his own suffering visited on the perpetrator of the *dolos* (1113–5: ἰδοίμαν δέ νιν, τὸν τάδε μησάμενον, τὸν ἴσον χρόνον/ ἐμὰς λαχόντ' ἀνίας, 'May I see him, the one who devised this, have a share of my suffering for an equal time.'). The referent for νιν is ambiguous—he may mean either Odysseus or Neoptolemos—but the chorus reacts as if Philoktetes were referring to itself. Kamerbeek comments: "the chorus may be assumed to identify themselves with their master."[103] But the chorus makes a concrete reference to its own physical presence with the word χείρ, even if it does so metonymically to indicate the agents of the deceit. And this 'hand' does not correspond to the hands which gesture as these lines are sung. The chorus tries to make itself, its hands, the physical representation of the action as a whole, at the same time as the song it sings and the hands that gesture as it sings it attempt to erase any significance to that action. It goes on to say: στυγερὰν ἔχε/ δύσποτμον ἀρὰν ἐπ' ἄλλοις./ καὶ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τοῦτο μέλει, μὴ φιλότητ' ἀπώσῃ. "Make your hateful curse against others. For it is my concern

[102] Kamerbeek 1980, 154 comments on the widely accepted additon of πότμος in line 1116 and the inconsistency it creates with 1095–7. Even if one does not accept Erfurdt's addition of πότμος to the text, the presence of the word δαιμνων indicates that the chorus is talking about divine intervention, and not its deceit, as the cause of Philoktetes' dilemma.

[103] Ibid.

that you not push away my friendship.' (1119–21). There is a double displacement of physical reality taking place here. First, the plot of the play, the actions performed by the characters up to this point, becomes the working of unseen δαίμονες rather than the human agents (πότμος δαιμόνων, 1116–7); then, by the use of the pronoun ἐμός, the chorus makes itself the agent and the focus of Philoktetes' wrath, rather than Odysseus or Neoptolemos, and tries to divert his wrath by representing itself as a friend (μὴ φιλότητ' ἀπώσῃ), not an enemy deserving of his curse. The attempt to displace or neutralize Philoktetes' anger by these substitutions would only succeed if, in pointing to itself with the pronoun ἐμᾶς, the chorus were able physically to stand both for the perpetrators of the *dolos* and for Philoktetes' friend, as well as the representatives of a perspective which considers the divine order the source of human suffering. Although at different times in the play it has been each of these things, these words only crystallize the incoherence of these multiple identities and mark the absence of a position, verbal or physical, from which the chorus can speak persuasively.

The chorus' failure to embody the friendship which it offers and to persuade Philoktetes to leave stands in vivid contrast to Philoktetes' 'response,' in which he personifies and addresses the bow as the embodiment of reciprocal friendship (and ignores the chorus altogether).[104] Far more real to Philoktetes than the unreliable arguments put forth by the humans in the play is the silent, unchanging presence of the bow, the physical object which his language animates and which represents for him the friendship of an ever-absent but trustworthy figure, Herakles. Philoktetes' language brings before our eyes the absent bow as a 'living' representation of Herakles' friendship. It allows us to feel the emotional force of the αἰσχραὶ ἀπάται the bow is now suffering in the hands of Odysseus. In contrast, the hollowness of the chorus' language is so plain, even to it, that it is forced to abandon its false position as Philoktetes' friend.

In its next words it retreats into aphorisms and generalities. This language, as it implies, has the virtue of not inflicting φθονερὰν ὀδυνάν, partly because it refers to no one in particular:

[104] See Blundell 1989, chap. 6, for an extensive discussion of the nature of *philia* in the play and the way it is problematized by the play's action. Rose 1976 sees *philia* in the play as an important indication of Sophokles' interest not in the code of "help friends, harm enemies," but the sophistic doctrine of the social contract.

ἀνδρός τοι τὸ μὲν ὂν δίκαιον εἰπεῖν,
εἰπόντος δὲ μὴ φθονερὰν ἐξῶσαι γλώσσας ὀδύναν.
κεῖνος δ' εἷς ἀπὸ πολλῶν
ταχθεὶς τοῦδ' ἐφημοσύνᾳ
κοινὰν ἤνυσεν ἐς φίλους ἀρωγάν.

It is the part of a man to plead his case
and, having said it, not to cause further pain with his tongue.
That man, one among many,
ordered by the command of this man,
brought aid to all his friends. (1140–1145).[105]

The defense of κεῖνος (whichever 'one of many' he may be) that he is merely bringing help to his friends redefines and depersonalizes the *philia* of its previous intimate appeal to Philoktetes by evoking the universal rule of 'helping one's friends.' The neutrality and impersonality of the language transforms the false and aggressive representation of itself in the previous lines into 'harmless' facelessness. Its retreat into vague generality in response to the vividness of Philoktetes' conviction marks a turning point in the kommos; from here on, the chorus abandons all impersonations and grounds its argument only in the concrete physical reality of the moment. It simply responds to Philoktetes' physical need. It is in its response to the physical reality of the wound that Philoktetes can finally hear it, and the irreconcilable difference between them is clearly established. The chorus argues that escape from the physical pain of his wound is the best argument for Philoktetes' coming to the ship, but in Philoktetes' mind the wound serves him as the powerful and necessary sign of his justified hatred of the Greeks.

Philoktetes focuses the kommos on his physical state by his address to the birds of prey that will soon devour him. In response the chorus attempts to persuade him by acknowledging this physical reality. It labels itself ξένον, not φίλον (1163), acknowledging the distance, physical and otherwise, between them. Having acknowledged that distance, it tries to persuade Philoktetes to do nothing more than πέλασσον,

[105] There have been a number of different emendations of these lines which affect how one understands to whom the chorus is referring with ἀνδρός, κεῖνος and τοῦδ', if that is the correct reading. Webster 1970, 140 points out the various possibilities, without arguing for any in particular. Again, what seems important is the chorus' retreat into vagueness. Nussbaum 1976, 35–6 argues that the chorus is reinforcing by its generalities Odysseus' commitment to the common good as the highest ethical standard and trying to temper Philoctetes' "unpleasant moaning about the cost of the 'general benefit' to his own interests."

'draw near,' (1163), make a physical motion in its direction, and offers itself reciprocally as a πελάτης, 'one who approaches,' (1164), as it presumably moves toward him. Instead of making arguments about fate and agency it states simply ἐπὶ σοὶ κῆρα τάνδ' ἀποφεύγειν, 'it is within your power to escape this disease,' (1165–6), where κῆρα τάνδ' points directly to the physical reality of the wound and ἐπὶ σοὶ refers to Philoktetes' ability to escape that reality with a strikingly physical and concrete expression. For the chorus the wound is a convincing and concrete reason for Philoktetes to agree to come to Troy and the only authentic argument it can make for the benefit he will gain by his agreement. But as soon as the two approach each other on the basis of the physical reality before them and the immediate need of addressing Philoktetes' pain, they are driven apart by their different understandings of the meaning of that reality. The chorus expresses vividly the physical burden of the wound: οἰκτρὰ γὰρ βόσκειν, ἀδαὴς δ'/ ὀχεῖν μυρίον ἄχθος ᾧ ξυνοικεῖ, 'it is pitiful to feed and cannot teach the one with whom it dwells to bear its infinite burden' (1167–8); for Philoktetes it is the eternal sign of the Greeks' untrustworthiness—the opposite, symbolically, of the bow.

The chorus' mention of the wound allows Philoktetes for the first time to respond directly to its words, at the beginning of the epode, and address it as λῷστε τῶν πρὶν ἐντόπων, 'better than those who have been here before,' (1171), presumably because of the sympathy the chorus has expressed for the consuming pain that Philoktetes has to bear. But the common ground created by the recognition of the wound and reflected in the form of the epode, in which their voices intermingle and respond to each other, serves only to mark absolutely the chorus' failure to persuade Philoktetes. This coming together only to repel is vividly captured in the echoing rhythms of lines 1176 (the chorus) and 1177 (Philoktetes), the only metrically identical lines in the epode. Philoktetes has accused the chorus of destroying him by trying to take him to Troy. The chorus simply states in 1176 that it considers that the best course (τόδε γὰρ νοῶ κράτιστον), and Philoktetes responds, in the same rhythm, that there is, then, no point in its staying (ἀπό νύν με λείπετ' ἤδη, 1177). Unlike the earlier evasions, substitutions, moralizing, and musings about the past, Philoktetes and the chorus confront each other in the present, in relation to the actual situation of the moment, and, in so doing, make it clear that they have, and have had, no way of approaching each other. When the chorus responds to Philoktetes' suggestion that it leave by using the word φίλα (1178) to describe its

eagerness to do so, it unmasks the emptiness of its earlier appeal to the supposed friendship that draws them together and that provides a reason for Philoktetes to accompany it.[106]

In the end for the chorus the only welcome solution is departure. In speaking for Neoptolemos the chorus has attempted to make Philoktetes feel that he is free to choose another course of action. But by its association with Neoptolemos and the plot of deceit it has both made itself untrustworthy to Philoktetes and undermined its ability to make a coherent argument based on its earlier pity for Philoktetes and understanding of his plight and its potential cure. Stripped of all its arguments, its borrowed voices, its poses, the chorus, confronting Philoktetes' physical condition, can only say that it thinks it best if he comes to Troy to be cured. Philoktetes can only see in the chorus' appeal a replay of the hollowness of the Greeks' pity long ago and their ultimate refusal to deal with his wound and with him.[107]

In an ironic reversal of the purpose Neoptolemos had in leaving the chorus with Philoktetes, Philoktetes tries, for the rest of the epode, to persuade the chorus to give him a weapon which he might use to kill himself, transforming the metaphoric accusation he makes at the beginning of the epode: τί μ' ὤλεσας; τί μ' ἔργασαι;, 'why have you destroyed me? what have you done to me?' into a physical reality. Philoktetes' attempt to make of the chorus the instrument of his destruction is the ultimate negation of the chorus' power, through song and dance, both to cure Philoktetes' state and to transform our vision of what is possible. Finally for him the chorus becomes merely the physical means to finish what the Greeks started when they abandoned Philoktetes on Lemnos, as if nothing at all had happened between then and now.

Significantly Philoktetes' request for a weapon to end his suffering is answered not by the chorus but by Neoptolemos, who now returns with the bow. This act of *philia*, if it is in fact meant sincerely, does

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[106] As Rose 1976, 75 says, "the idiom they first choose to express this eagerness [to leave] (φίλα μοι, φίλα... 1177) seems to embody the poet's ironic comment on the insincerity of their φιλότης for Philoctetes."

[107] Odysseus argues, in the prologue, that the Greeks were justified in abandoning Philoktetes because of the way his cries disrupted their sacrifices. Nussbaum 1976, 31 understands Odysseus' argument as evidence for his focus on the common good. Is the common good in fact justification for Philoktetes' abandonment, making his anger at the Greeks the product of stubborn self-absorption? If one views the wound, as the chorus has done elsewhere, as an indication of the general human condition, it does not seem an adequate response, however justified it might be, simply to abandon him to deal with it on his own.

transform our vision of what is possible, even as it leads to an ending which contradicts what we know must happen. The chorus' failure in the kommos shows us what is needed—an imagination and an expression that can counteract the history of deceit and betrayal and can make the argument that what has to be is just. Song and dance as a possible source for such a vision finally cannot break free of what has happened to show us what might be. The chorus contributes nothing more to the play after the kommos. Neoptolemos' growing love of Philoktetes and his nascent moral understanding give him more authority, but he too fails to erase his past actions and embody the argument for why Philoktetes must go to Troy. Only Herakles, with the generosity of his physical and divine presence and his μύθοι of *philia* and the ἀθάνατος ἀρετή of πόνοι (1419–20), has the necessary authority to persuade, but he offers his human audience no explanation, no language which would allow us to understand in our terms what the divine voice commands.

The chorus' performance is thus part of the dramatization of the poverty of human resources for creative and constructive movement that shadows and confines the whole play. Herakles' appearance provides the voice that can move the plot in the necessary direction and only confirms its absence in the human world of the play.[108] We have seen the chorus' ambiguous position as both co-conspirators with Neoptolemos and Odysseus and as a group capable of expressing a point of view that distinguishes it from the actors. The chorus' independent perspective provides a basis for disinterested pity for Philoktetes through an understanding of the human condition and a belief that Philoktetes' story will, in the long run, have a meaningful structure. But because the chorus has also lent its song to furthering the deceit of Philoktetes and attempting to bring about the goal that the deceit serves, the resulting inconsistency and fragmentation of its voice limit the credence we or Philoktetes can give it. The nature of choral song—its dependence on a traditional form and on the repetitive performative moment, its unique relation to time which distances it from the sequential development of an action, its patterning in a logic which does not take account of cause and effect or the responsible choices of the individual agent—prevents the chorus from being a meaningful 'actor' in the drama. At the same time, the intrusion of the action into the chorus' perception of its role

[108] Podlecki 1966 summarizes this pessimistic vision of human *logos* and emphasizes the distinction between Herakles' *muthos* and human speech.

undermines the authority of its independent voice in the various ways we have discussed.

No means in language or in action exist, among the human participants, to mitigate the purity of Philoktetes' anger, for no one else can match his absolute singularity of purpose and the subsequent integrity of his language and offer a viable alternative to his destructive vision.[109] The chorus' single stasimon, in as much as it can be heard independently of the other songs, reminds us of what the choral imagination, expressed in a coherent form, might achieve, by picturing Philoktetes' story as an illustration of divine recompense for human suffering. When, at the end of the play, Herakles, by insisting that Philoktetes return to Troy, makes clear that that divine recompense involves further suffering of a sort the chorus has not imagined, we experience the limit of the chorus' vision even in its purest expression.[110] How people use language is for Sophokles a crucial way of indicating the integrity and strength of their moral and ethical positions. The disintegration of the choral voice and Neoptolemos' failure to reconcile the conflicting demands of Philoktetes and the Greeks at Troy signal Sophokles' deep pessimism, at this point in his life, about the human capacity to develop its myopic vision of what might bring about a cure for the festering stagnation of the Greeks at Troy and Philoktetes on Lemnos.

[109] To call Philoktetes' vision destructive is not to deny its integrity or his heroic endurance. But at the same time the play makes absolutely clear that his attitude demands a move 'backward' for Neoptolemos, who, as a representative of the next generation, cannot move backward without loss.

[110] Easterling 1978a, 37–38 argues that, at the end of the play, Troy symbolizes both Odysseus' "corrupt unheroic world of politics" and a society which is necessary for Philoktetes' well-being. I would agree with this interpretation of Troy but go on to say that, since Troy represents both of these things, Philoktetes' return to it indicates the impossibility of living outside the world of corrupt politics and all the pain that that implies.

EPILOGUE

We have seen that there are significant differences in the way Sophokles uses the chorus in the *Antigone* and the *Philoktetes*. In the *Antigone* the assumptions that the actors make about their ability to shape the course of events are implicitly questioned by the chorus, whose song and dance evoke an order that is not shaped by human choices. Its ability to evoke that order, to use its song and dance to bring the divine world into the action of the play, is its own form of action. At the same time, the chorus' lack of comprehension of the process of deliberation and choice in which the actors must engage reveals the limit of its perspective. From the audience's perspective, actors and chorus together form a whole which, however difficult to hold together conceptually, imaginatively or emotionally, creates a sense of the full potential for human participation in the course of events.

The *Philoktetes* offers no such completeness. Not only do the perspectives of the different characters fracture rather than complement each other, but the perspective of the chorus is internally fragmented, as it moves between serving the actors' plot and expressing an independent understanding of what it witnesses. Its attempts to participate in the plot reveal the limitations of its form of expression, as song becomes another form of deceit or displays its inability to understand the conditions that shape the actors' world. Song has become corrupted in the world of human agency. And although the chorus succeeds in expressing its own, independent perspective, its point of view bears little relation to the movement of the plot. Rather than being a resource for understanding what is happening on stage, its unique understanding of the human condition seems disturbingly irrelevant. For the audience, then, the interactions of different perspectives dramatize the way in which each perspective is inadequate or flawed, and the play as a whole brings into question the possibility of even the difficult coherence which multiple points of view in tension with each other can provide.

Yet, despite the differences between the two plays, the chorus' role in both takes shape from the mode of its performance: what the patterns of dance can represent, how the rhythm and sound of song go hand in hand with a particular syntactical order, how images can represent truth. And the relation of the chorus to the action and the actors takes

place in the context of their different modes of performance. The audience never loses sight of the difference, as it is vividly present in the verbal gestures of song and the physical movement of the dance. For Sophokles the chorus' mode of expression and the perspective it entails are an integral part of the world he creates, offering, as they do, a way of being in the world which responds to and overcomes the limits of human reason and self-determination. The tight structure of Sophoklean drama creates out of the worlds of chorus and actors a coherent whole, even when communication of and between different perspectives is severely compromised, as in the *Philoktetes*. Part of the tragic experience for the audience, however, is the knowledge that life outside the ritual of the theater offers no such coherence. Creating it as an individual or as a civic community requires its own dance of words and perhaps, ultimately, the appearance of the unexpected god.

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